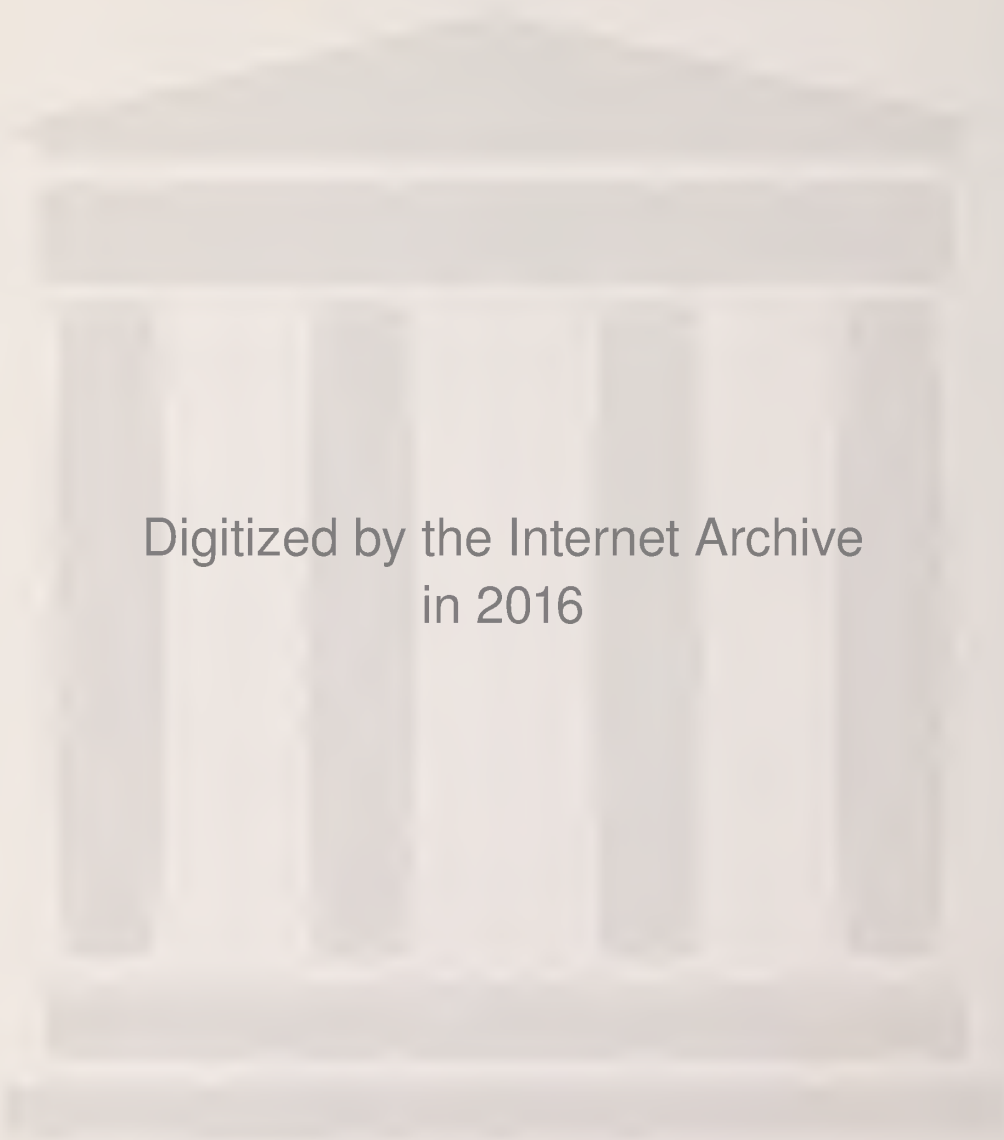
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VERT REVIEW

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CALVERT REVIEW SPRING 1968

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New Landscape

The face of the child I hold
Swells, and his face bleeds,
and the broken one on the cross
splits at his straining joints
and rushes to pour to the ground.
The child's eyes are lost;
The bare wood on the cross is crimson:

This is the landscape's loam
for my rock-twisted roots.

Lighter stalks of new grass,
their smell, and the porch in the rain,
callings to those on the walk
to come, and greeted, to stay—
these are past being nutrition
because of desolation
and the new age of vision:

Eyes held straight inward
by delicate precision.

—*L. S. Gordon*

"So she said"

So she said to me,
        just softening between her thighs,
that she wouldn't again,
                not even see.

But if she had looked
                then,
        my eyes hurt in amused surprise, knowing
        the would-be question "why?"
would make her a
        twisting,
                rising,
                        moaning,
                                liar.

—*Bart Gruzalski*

COUSIN HOWARD

They took a Sunday ride. They stopped at a little house with footage on Back River. Bobby's father told him to be nice and not to say anything. Before they got to the door, Aunt Feeney came out to meet them. She was short and very fat. Her eyes were dark and so small. She giggled. The front door led into a bedroom. The only other room was a kitchen. Uncle John lay on a filthy mattress. There were hundreds, perhaps thousands, of flies in the house. They were crawling all over Uncle John. They covered his feet. He wore only pajama bottoms. When he got up the flies scattered toward the visitors. Bobby ducked and jumped and squealed. His mother and father pretended to ignore the flies. Bobby commented upon the flies and Uncle John's huge feet. The old man smiled indulgently at the little boy. Bobby's father told him to go out and see if he could find Cousin Howard.

Cousin Howard, who had been peeking in the side window, came around to meet Bobby at the front door. They walked down to the water. Cousin Howard wore a navy blue turtle-neck sweater and blue jeans. He had a long black beard that was cut straight across at the bottom. Bobby thought that he was a sailor and called him Long John Silver. Bobby asked him questions but Cousin Howard only smiled or nodded or smiled and nodded and, in short, was very nice and so gentle. On the way home Bobby's father became angry with him for embarrasing Uncle John. But Bobby's mother said, "Oh Rob, stop yelling. He's only a little boy. How's he supposed to know?"

Howard had been in the army for a short time. He was discharged under circumstances that even the family had never learned. But this is not to say that they ever cared to learn. And if anyone were to ask any of the family just who did care about Cousin Howard, they would doubtless hesitate and then admit, somewhat surprised at such a thought, that no one cared. But, of course, they would have been wrong since Bobby cared and would go on caring for years. Months would go by, perhaps even a year or two, during which he would not once think of Howard. And then opening a gate or glancing down at leeched soil, he would pause and watch Cousin Howard and himself walking, standing, hand in hand, trees, the river through the trees, a brief interview, calm.

Years passed before he found out that Cousin Howard had once written a song that, years and years before, had been a national favorite and that Cousin Howard had never worked but only wrote poems and music. Still later he learned that Cousin Howard had peeked through the window because for years he had been banned from the house. There was a ladder at the side of the house which he used to climb up to his bed of cardboard and newspaper in the rafters. Only after Uncle John died and Aunt Feeney was committed did he take control of the house. And what control he took! Everything so neat. A place for everything—bottle tops, leaves, stones, glass, a whole barrel of broken glass, a jar of flies' wings. "They must have been dead first," thought Bob.

When he died the neighbors looted the little house because it was rumored that Cousin Howard had saved thousands of dollars from his welfare checks and had hidden the money about the house. And they tore apart his shelves and scattered all of his fine things. And the Department of Sanitation came and threw it all, unread poems, unheard music, flies' wings and the things left behind by flies out to the front of the house and it took two or three truck loads to haul it all away. And the newspaper photographer came and took a picture of the huge pile and they put the picture on a front page. A typical hermit story. And that morning thousands of people either laughed or clucked their tongues or shook their heads or did combinations thereof.

—*Robert J. Ferris, Jr.*

Advertiser's Nightmare

I dream of drops and floating cartridges
Awash with loose debris. They bob along
Beneath old dental bridges
(Sweet dreams! Run sluggish, till I end this song),
And the earth is bottled in a soupy fog
While I drift through Ever Ever Land,
Then flounder on a log
With my Felicia, who is wan and worn.
I hold her weary hand,
Since no one cares at all about the fate
Of a daughter who was never ever born;
Then watch the old, cold sandwiches I ate
Begin to wrinkle in the wrappy drafts
Like drip-dry laundry, double clean to touch.
Though ash trays and rivulets of fire wafts
Make everything a stew,
I see some soiled posters say
IT'S NEW! NEW! NEW!
GO GRAB A DAB OF FLORIDA!
(Where all the beachers smile with a crutch
Before they fly away with draft-brewed beers.)
But this I should repeat:
Though soapy sirens wail in my ears,
I'm not Odysseus. Tonight we eat,
Drink and then forget it, forget it, forget it.

—*Gary Imlay*

To Belanchoy, Died Young

If it escaped you that the makers of magic at least,
if not magic itself, can die; if it escaped you
how only colored lights make colored water;
if it escaped you, Belanchoy is dead.
Bel, the golden boy who sat behind you,
the quiet one, who never volunteered
except on questions no one else could answer,
and then unwillingly, who told tales
that no one believed and everyone remembered,
who sang songs with no familiar words,
with old fine tunes you could recall forever,
who had a rifle, sometimes, under the arm with the tattoos—
"Born to Lose," and under that, "Death Before Dishonour,"
is dead.

Bel, decapitated in an automobile in Germany,
or else Austria, somewhere, whose head
the loveliest Estee Lauder girl dared not touch
without invitation, lying in blood,
in the street, in Germany somewhere.
And the colored lights out
and the water still
after the ambulance is gone,
still on the freshwatered clean street,
with the oak trees dripping down
in the empty street.

"Let's ask Chadwick," he would say, his voice barely clearing the lectern,
"the playwright's intention
regarding our attitudes toward the two worlds in this play."
And Bel answered, with another question, and answered both,
with such a touch of his hand on air
that the questions became erased, the intention
and attitudes erased, only his hand,
and his voice remained, on an upward inflection,
like the moving and breathing of a question mark.
But he would have looked down, he looked down,
before the agreement came, no longer part of it.
Inward to the still water.

Bel, later, with his head in the street,
later, gently laid
altogether, flying home over the water
through violent storms,
home to some unmentioned, unimagined parents,
his father perhaps a liberal editor somewhere,
his mother an Abraxist, a most gentle lady,
who will never recover, as we will not recover,
we having seen too little, she too much
of Belanchoy Chadwick, whose seat we leave empty on Monday,
whose place is a shadow against the wet leaves at the window.

—*L. S. Gordon*

Confinement

He hides his tears behind the soft gray walls
Erected long ago, before his birth.
He wishes someone else were here . . . —Who calls?
Maybe a friend who values hidden worth?

A boy with football eyes, who wants to play
On grassy fields many stories down,
And cries because he lives so far away;
And though the voice grows faint it cannot drown.

He longs for someone else . . . he tried to dance
Down the streets where throngs of surly cars
Stood smoking while they idled; it was a chance
To view the sunset through smog that sullied stars.

Why should he leave the girded walls of gray?
Because there is someone somewhere whom he'll meet
At last, and then they'll both be on their way,
Secure, untroubled by the vulgar beat.

Eventually they'll climb the flight of years
That reach the floor where he confined himself;
And then they'll wipe away the walled-in tears
That marred the lonely beauty of his Self.

—*Gary Imla*

IT WAS A NIGHT IN JUNE

It was a night in June. Little boys were running and shouting. Bobby watched from his front steps until he saw a pattern in their flight. He ran to join one group of them and asked Tommy what was happening. Tommy said that they were after a boy. They continued running, neither one knowing where the group would lead them. They turned into the alley behind McElderry Street. There they stopped by a fenced yard. In the yard stood two boys. One was trembling. He drew back into the darkness. The other boy stood close to the fence and faced the group, now assuredly, now meekly, trying to find the right verbal thrust.

"This is my yard. You can't come in!" he shouted. Then he continued in a pleading voice, "He didn't mean it. Why don't you all let him go. Anyhow, it's not fair all of you against one."

"It wasn't fair against Jerry either," screamed Tommy. They let go with squeals and shrieks and pressed forward, pushing through the gate. They thrust the boy aside and then slowed the pace of their advance. Some of them smiled, but some others were serious faced as they moved toward the still trembling boy. His back was to the fence. They closed around him a dark semi-circle. A realization came upon some of the others and they too smiled.

His eyes went wide and he sucked in for a scream. But they were on him and he swallowed his sounds. They jostled each other to grab at his hair, his arms, his clothing. They dragged him from the yard and pushed and pulled and kicked him toward the end of Potomac Street. Here the narrow street, lined with trees and row houses, came to an end as it spread out into a black gravel parking lot. And here stood a lamp post. They forced him to sit, his back to the post and lashed his wrists behind the post with an elastic belt. His face did not twitch but his eyes jumped about. The little boys pushed and pulled one another so as to get close and smile in his face. Jerry pushed through the group, took a handful of the boy's hair, and jerked his head back, stretching wide the eyes.

"Thought you were tough last week, didn't ya?" Jerry said with a grin.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean it. I was just goin' around with 'em. I ain't in 'em."

"Yeh," said Jerry, "then why did ya hit me with the carrot, huh?"

"I didn't know who you were. I was just with 'em," pleaded the boy.

Jerry spat in his face.

"You like that?"

"No, I don't like it."

"Ya don't huh?" He pulled the boy's hair. The boy tried to stand up but Jerry brought his heel down on the boy's shin.

"Let me get 'im. I gotta idea," said Leroy. The boys stopped giggling and jumping and let Leroy pass. Leroy knelt down in front of the boy and reached into his back pocket. He took out a knife, pressed the button, and the blade sprang open. He flashed it for all to see with a smooth flick of the wrist. The little boys let out a gasp. Leroy was older. The skin on his face was loose and white. He was a surly boy who rarely smiled. He was mentally retarded and he had been to training school for attacking a little boy over at the clay hills. Leroy said to untie the boy and hold him tight. Jerry loosed the belt and two other boys jumped down and held each tight to an arm. Leroy rested the point of the blade on the back of the little boy's left hand. The little boys started giggling again, this time to hide a vague fear and a swiftly growing sensuality. They pressed together for a better view. Leroy cut into the skin with the tip of the blade. He made little more than a scratch and the blood rose to the surface in beads only toward the beginning of the verticle line. The little boy watched and bit his lip as Leroy continued to cut in the letter 'F'.

"Fuck, fuck. He's gonna write 'Fuck' in his hand."

Leroy continued as far as "C" and ran out of room. A middle aged man wearing an undershirt who had been sitting on his porch drinking beer and watching for several minutes, ran over to the little boy and lifted him up. He told the little boy to go home. The little boy walked slowly toward the garages to the right of the parking lot. He looked back twice. After the second look, he ran swiftly.

—Robert J. Ferris, Jr.

VIGNETTE

Her lips parted over
the drinking fountain,
One wind-in-the-wheat hand
holding back her gently falling hair,
The other,
dew-clinging and Venus-like,
grasping the fountain's base firmly, until
Drained,
She flung back her head,
smiling.

—Bart Gruzalski

where we get off
a short hard novel

Of Their Voyage And How They Passed The Sea, And Of Their Safe Arrival At Cape Cod

September 6, 1620. These troubles being blown over, and now all being compact together in one ship, they put to sea again with a prosperous wind, which continued diver days together, which was some encouragement unto them; yet according to the usual manner many were afflicted with seasickness. And I may not omit here a special work of God's providence. There was a proud and very profane young man, one of the seamen, of a lusty able body, which made him the more haughty; he would always be contemning the poor people in their sickness, and cursing them daily with grievous execrations, and did not let to tell them that he hoped to help to cast half of them overboard before they came to their journey's end, and to make merry with what they had; and if he were by any gently reproved, he would swear and curse most bitterly. But it pleased God before they came half-seas over to smite this young man with a grievous disease, of which he died in a desperate manner, and so was himself the first that was thrown overboard.

William Bradford,
Of Plymouth Plantation

"Nobody knows how to fuck anymore, he used to say. He was beautiful. The thing you remember is that he was beautiful. It came out of him—out of his face and body. I didn't understand it, what it was. Excuse me a second."

He gets up from the bar and walks over to a table where two men and two women are sitting. He talks to them for a while and then returns to the bar.

"Yea, seeing his show today brought it all back. It was like curtains opening up in one of the old theaters still around. I could tell you where he took most of those pictures, except the ones in South America. Like the one on the bus. Yea, then I saw our bus—from slightly out of Maryland, through Congress Heights and past St. Elizabeth's hospital, where old Ezra Pound used to sit and gaze at the buses going by and into downtown. D.C. was a real bitch."

One of the women from the table comes to the bar and puts her hand on Gabriel's shoulder.

"Why don't you join us, Gabe?" she says.

"Yea sure, I'll be right there," Gabriel says. "Bring me a Jack Daniels over to the table, will you, Sam?"

I

The summer road was winding and clear. Virginia fields went by measured and framed by white fences. It's fitting on a Sunday, Jonas thought, and he half-closed his eyes so that the grass looked black.

Brushstroked like a sonofabitch.

He sat slouching in the seat, holding a bottle tightly in his crotch. He lit a cigarette and held the match in front of his face, so that it cut the blacktop road into halves. He downshifted for a turn and accelerated as he hit it, sliding the rear end into the shoulder and lifting a cloud of dirt. Rocks hit the floor. The wind caught his hair and blew the cigarette from his mouth. He sat up, relaxing his foot from the accelerator and found the bottle in his crotch. He drank from it, choking and spilling the bourbon on his face. Amber spots on his shirt. He bent over and coughed laughing, wiping bourbon and tears from his face. His moist eyes were green in the sun.

The sun stroked the windshield, and the car, moving slowly, went off the road into the white wood fence. It rolled down a hill and stopped at the edge of a wood.

He sensed a humidity. An air so wet you must die, he thought.

He looked at the trees, analyzing the bark colors and saw a caterpillar and its pale green slowly moving into a background of darker greens and the movement of the air was not strong enough for him.

I remember Virginia fields like silent Manassas, now only places salesmen drive by and wipe their summer sweat with kerchiefed hands; dusty yards around the houses and once I walked a mile with a watermelon under my arm and I dropped the sonofabitch and grew me a watermelon tree.

Shaggy quiet goats grazed between the trees, oblivious of him and the car. Each goat stood alone, independent of each other and the trees, brass bells tied around their necks. Behind them, the trees and the grass thinned out and it was hillsides—raised dirt without grass and he saw a man walking to him. A waiter coming to me, adjusting his tie and his waiter eyes, he thought. There was raised dust around the man's shoes and wind in his hair and Jonas heard the trees with the wind of the man's hair and the sullen white goats and the deep clanking of their bells.

Gabriel walked up Fourteenth Street. He crossed T Street and passed Brown's cafe. He thought of what he was writing and George's call annoyed him. The story was late and he did not know if the *Washingtonian* would accept it now. It was not yet dark and the lamplight was pale on the walls.

The summer is like a warm winter, he thought. It has none of last year's smells. Black town—even the houses and the street. It's black as hell uptown.

A woman rocked herself and a child on the steps of the building. From somewhere in back, children's voices reached him without sense. He passed the woman, who sat looking at his face.

When he was twenty-two.
He learned to tie his shoe.

The paint peeled white on the dark green of the wall. Printed flowers in July, he thought. Brown door and the odor of old calico. Black girl at the door. Black hands slow and steady open the door.

George sat on the sofa. The blind was drawn and Gabriel could only see the white tee shirt in the dimness of the room; then the black hands moving and then the face. He walked past George and let the blind fly up. He raised the window, letting the lamplight shine in on George's face. The girl stood near the door, drying her face with a towel. Drops of water rolled from her face to her bare shoulders and spotted her slip.

"It stinks outside too," Gabriel said.

"You want a beer, man?" George said.

"No. Where is he?"

"He's all right. He's in the john. Let me get you a beer, man."

"George. I don't want a goddamn beer—I've got work to do."

George walked by the girl, into the kitchen. "He's asleep!" he yelled. "Been asleep since last night. Can't get near him. Soon as you wake him, he hits you. Dolores, where's the opener—can't find the bastard."

Jonas lay in the tub. His head had rolled to one side and his hair was wet. His hands were open at his sides. Gabriel knelt by the tub and pulled him by the shirt.

"Wake up, man. It's Gabe." He slapped Jonas' face until the eyes opened. "Wake up, damn you."

"Gabe?" Jonas lifted his hands to his face, covering his eyes. "How've you been, Gabe?"

Gabriel laughed. "Get the hell up, man."

"Give me a minute, man." How've you been, Gabe, he thought.

"Where've you been, Jonas?"

"In town, man." Just a minute, man.

"I talked to Donely. I think you're fired."

Jonas took Gabriel's arm and, leaning on him, climbed out of the tub. He turned and grasped the sink and looked into the mirror. "How'd you know I was here?"

"George called me."

"Black shit queer. Picked me up at the Cairo." Saw me drunk.

"He took care of you."

"Shit." Brought the chick with me. Bitch tried to poison me. Pissed in my beer.

Jonas laughed, still holding the sink. "She pissed in my beer, man."

"Let's go, Jonas," Gabriel said.

Jonas took a cigarette out of his shirt pocket. His hand was shaking.

"I'm sick, man. I've got a dose. Had it all week." Last Saturday I thought I had the clap and all week I've had the clap and I can't walk. "Gabe?" I've got a piece of towel wrapped around my dick, man, and I left the juice all over the Cairo Hotel. Those bitches, Gabe.

"You've had it all week?"

"Snagglepus let me in the club free. Sat near the band." Snagglepus drinks Scotch. Missed you, man; and waking thought it was your white legs I'd seen walking away between the buildings—concrete grammar schools where we had

stood. "How'd you like that sonofabitch picking me up. Suck me off." Brought the chick with me. From the green fields of Virginia. "Man, Saturday—" D.C. opening up carelessly from the Southeast side in the morning. Across the Eleventh Street Bridge niggers pile in and cologne mixes with the warm air coming through the windows and the first thing I see at the store is Jeniffer's ass and she gives me little touches behind Donely who knows it anyway and she goes and gets drunk for lunch and takes me down to the ladies room and fucks me all over the floor and passes out and I keep on going down there and when she opens her eyes she grabs me and pops her wad again, with nothing, just the dirt. She rolls all over the john and pops her wad and Donely bowtied behind the counter. And then the old man—an old nigger bumming a dime and the cats telling him, we're not allowed, we're not allowed and me calling the old man, feeling his black eyes and the quiver of his nostrils and I knew he felt it as I did, that there was something and he looked at the door quickly and then back at me and at my eyes and I was telling him, over there, over there, that bastard'll give you a dime and I shoved the old man, not hard, and then I thought that I yelled and was thinking how the old man stank. The old black back moving slowly to Donely and the old man's old hat and his old kinky hair sticking out somewhat.

He had walked out of the bathroom and Gabriel followed him.

Jonas found the sofa and dropped into it. Dolores went to him and pressed the towel to his face.

George came in from the kitchen with two beers. He gave one to Jonas and sat down on the end of the sofa, near the window.

"Jonas, you shouldn't drink," Gabriel said.

"I saw Molly last week," Jonas said. He let his head fall on Dolores' breasts. She put her arms around his neck and lifted her head, looking at Gabriel and then at George, who, sitting with his beercan still unopened in his hand, looked out the window, into the street.

"She told me," Gabriel said.

"I gave her some pictures of the old man's *finca*." Goldstein's place now. "Did you like the pictures, Gabe?" It was green too, back then, but it was bamboo. The bamboo grew green and lying face down in the grass it was all green, even the sugarcane which was yellow-brown in the summer. In the grass back then. Water lilies where once a girl fell in the pond with her bicycle and Rosalia pulled her out while I ran. We cut and peeled the cane with long dark knives and chopped the pieces into small sticks to suck and chew. The room smelling of *aqua-dulce* and in the dark I felt her fingers and above I smelled the sugarcane and I felt her mouth and her squeezing—the tightness and she sucked so hard the teeth scratched and the tongue always moving—until she hurt my balls and I felt thick sweat and grasped her head with both hands. Oh the sweet scented blankets and the yellow-brown shoulders. Then she turned and the windows were black past her legs and I saw the white buttocks, up, wrapped in the *manta* and I went up in there until she screamed and I never ate sugar-

cane again. I left anyway, before Christmas, which is always in the middle of the summer.

"Jonas, let's go," It was Gabriel.

"Molly liked them," Jonas said. Big-legged Molly grinding your ass against the bed, for she likes it on top, I remember, and when she comes, bending her head back, her tits tremble on top; dragging her hair, looking for things in the air. And now you're holding your wad for Molly, Gabe, until she says, now Gabe, now; and plan to see her folks on Saturday afternoon. I remember you walking away, till you became part of the fucking marble fountain nigger kids piss in in the summer when they swim, yelling outside my window. And now, man, your scene is bucolic with both of you standing in the Virginia house with trees and crickets and worms.

The white frame house. And at the window stood Mrs. . . . Oh, lady, lady. Her large breasts were there with nipples like they look when urine-rashed you've not been loved for months—months of sitting, and then in certain afternoon hours seen the cars, for they are all grey at that hour and your hair, as if bed-set is affected by the breeze. Oh a breeze as that which hits you at the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue when it turns around the Treasury and leads you to Lafayette Square and to the White House. The breeze at that hour, when fingerprints on your sunglasses and the used saliva on your lips and the other side of the street all breeze on you and blow you a kiss. She blows you a kiss. The whore blows a kiss to you when she reaches for the pickled onions and aims carefully as if . . . at you, framed by her arm and sighted by the delicate hairs of her underarm—for all hair there is delicate, being that it can only grow to a size to fit the soft curved underarm of a whore, or a woman; but forgive not Pennsylvania Avenue, when grey it turned that hour and let it upon you, empty, so it felt grey in your trachea, and if you happened to have a piece of metal in your hand, such as a pen or a camera or another such thing that you would have, you would have deposited it somewhere—the touch being unbearable in that air. But lady (it must be Virginia, for the white of the house and the dark hair of the woman so seem to be, and the green of the background forests), lady, your breasts. But oh, here comes mister Donely. Mister Donely sits on the porch cross-legged—one shoe dangling from his foot. He looks at it and smiles and looks to the lady, who in turn looks at me. I do not care for your foot, she says. And I do not blame you, I interpose; and having thus spoken, I proceed to help her off the porch. She raises her thin foot and I take it.

II

—"Por Dios te ruego, marinero, digasme ora ese cantar."
Respondiole el marinero, tal respuesta le fue a dar:
—"Yo no digo esta cancion sino a quien conmigo va."
Romance del Conde Arnaldos

"Eh Rafael."

The waiter turned and looked at Jonas. "More wine?"

"Yes. When do we dock?"

"If it were not for the fog, you could see Limón from here."

"Good. He's calling you." Jonas motioned to the head-waiter, who was hissing and waving from one of the tables. Rafael's arm moved and the moist gentle towel brushed against Jonas' head and rested there, covering the young man's eyes from the circular lights of the ceiling and the head-waiter's thin moustached face.

BANDIT DIES BATTLING

Bogota—Efrain Gonzales, a Colombian bandit accused of 100 murders, was killed Wednesday, single-handedly fighting a four-hour gunbattle with several hundred troops. He killed five soldiers and wounded 14 before falling dead. The besiegers used rifles, teargas, submachine guns, grenades and cannon against him.

The Washington Post—Friday, June 11, 1965

Cayetano Ruiz stopped running in back of the bus depot. He looked back to the row of adobe houses. The light went out in Maria's house. The stinking bitch, he thought. And now she is going to sleep. He tightened the straps of his sandals and started to run again, into the darkness, away from the houses.

Now he could hear the river.

He took off his clothes, wrapped his sandals in them and tied the bundle around his neck with his belt.

The water was cold for December.

He let the current carry him around the bend, to the widest part of the river, and then swam to shore. The trees were high and they blotted out the sky with a more severe blackness. He felt a movement from the trees and saw Efrain walking toward him, holding a blanket in his hands.

"This way. I have a fire."

Cayetano followed him. The ground hurt his bare feet.

They did not talk until the rum was finished. Cayetano felt the warmth of the liquor in his face. He moved so that his feet were near the metal that covered the fire.

"There are rumors," Cayetano said.

"There are always rumors."

"No. There were no rumors. Now there are rumors."

"Cayetano, there are always rumors."

"Yes."

His cousin sat on the side of the terrace with her legs sticking out over the side, dangling in the air. She had her arms over the iron bar and it pushed her breasts flat against her chest.

"When are you going back, Jonas?" she asked.

"Don't know." He saw Mrs. Goldstein's yellow head glint in the dark and rest itself on Ricardo's shoulder.

I wonder if it will rain this December, he thought. It fills the ground up. "We're going to San Isidro tomorrow," he said. "Honey's going with me."

"You think it's safe now?"

"Jack's been there all month."

"They burned grandfather's house."

"Yes."

"They killed Manuel and his son and then they burned them up with the house."

"Yes, they burned the old man's house. They burn anything, but they hate the big houses."

"Jack says he'll get them," she said.

"Yes, I know. Jack told me he'd get them. Jack told me, when he saw the house and Manuel and the boy, he said he'd get them." He turned to look for Honey Goldstein, but did not see her. Yes Jack will get them, he thought, and went back into the house to the bar and poured the bourbon freely into his glass.

Looking past Honey and out the bus window, he remembered the dust and the yellow buses. He was five then, the first time, and now the bus was the same, passing Alajuela.

He had cut his hair. He had sat with the early sun shining through the green of the Parque Central in San José and through plate glass window of Díaz' barber shop and flashing on Díaz' scissors. And later he had washed off the cologne and looking in the mirror, shaved his underarms and his crotch.

The bus filled up in Alajuela and there were three and four sitting on each seat. In front of him, some women were praying with rosaries. Their lips moved silently with their quick hands. One of them pointed out the window.

"Poas," she said.

The volcano showed yellow amid the blue mountains. Jonas remembered the old man's whiskers pressing so hard against his face that it hurt. And the discolor of his eyes. His grey hair was turning white and Jonas could see the mountains and the old man's hand sweeping across them; the old man's rum and the raising of his chin as he gulped it; the back of his forearm coming down and the shaking of the table. The war, the war, the old man would say, and Jonas would say, what war, and he would say, the war, the war, and Jonas would say, the war, the war. Black hair on the women. The tamales hot and the sauce running on his face and fingers. The green mosaic benches of San Isidro.

The bus swayed on the dirt road.

The wire of the fence was cold in Honey Goldstein's hand. She saw Captain Gomez' blue jeep raising dust, approaching her and stopping in front of the charred remains of the house. She went in to the peon's house and sat

down in the big room, near the window. Jonas was asleep in a cot. The curtain reflected part of the light and her hand showed through it, parting it. She looked past Captain Gomez and her husband and past the house and then saw Jonas walking down the hill in back of the burned house and she turned quickly to the cot. She smiled and she was thinking of the blue jeep. She felt the same air and heat that had burned her skin playing around the blue jeeps. Always on Sundays, the four doorless jeeps stood around and the country seemed deserts with the two white houses at a distance in the afternoon. Running, she saw her face. She held her lips closed; and breathing again—the air on her face —and her arms brown in that sun. They said that there were bats underneath the big house and she remembered most of all the part where the dark started and she felt cold. Funny that there was no music. It was years too, when walking on roads and stepping in fields of cabbages was the biggest part and eating lemons pure and green like they were then and, too, like Jonas felt also (anyway enough to tell her), the grass, thicker, smelling on her clothes and her hands.

There was some wind now and he felt it clean on his cropped hair. Walking up the bare hill and looking steadily at the line where it stopped, the black posts of the house grew slowly and then Goldstein and Captain Gomez grew slowly and Jonas walked to them, raising his right hand as he put an unlit cigarette in his mouth.

Honey Goldstein's tongue appeared at the corner of her mouth and disappeared. Jonas put his arm under her head, lifting her hair from the dirt. He tried to pull the skirt under her thighs, but she spread her legs apart and closed them around his buttocks, pulling him down. He cut his knees on the ground and when he raised himself and touched his knees and looked up from the red on his hands, he saw that she was gripping the wire fence and cutting her hands on the barbs.

Captain Gomez reached past the rum to the bottle of Scotch.

"I think we will have a machine-gun," he said. "Two men are coming from San Ramon with it. Perhaps they will be on time."

"Perhaps they will know how to use it," Goldstein said.

Captain Gomez nodded. "Whisky?" he asked Jonas.

"No."

Honey Goldstein's legs were white and long below the red shorts, and her calves were tightened into shape by open, high-heeled shoes. "Are you going with them, Jonas?"

"Yes, I'm going. It looks like Jack's going to get them."

"Bring your camera," Goldstein said.

"I'm not looking at a fucking camera."

"Christ, O.K." The gun was black in Goldstein's hands and the ends of his fingers rubbed oil on it until the nails were black too and his fingers tingled.

"There will be fifty or sixty with Garcia and his men," Captain Gomez said, "counting the regular soldiers."

"Yea, Garcia wants him real bad," Goldstein said. "They say Gonzales made it real bad for his brother, before he killed him."

"Keep an eye on Garcia."

"Yea. He's a real nervous bastard now."

The jeep moved out slowly in first gear and Jonas counted the gears and then the distant lights of houses and then the trees.

It was still dark when they got to Garcia's place .

There was a half-circle of sandbags in front of the jeeps. It was light now and they had already killed one of Gonzales' men and a woman. He had walked out of the house and Captain Gomez picked him off from inside the jeep. The women looked out of the window and was hit several times. She fell across the window and was left there—hanging; her hands almost touching the ground. One of Garcia's men had crawled to the man's body, cut its head off and had thrown it into the window, over the woman. He was hit in the back of the head before he could reach the sandbags.

"Gonzales is alone, now," Goldstein said. "We can wait."

"Look. They're praying." Jonas pointed to the bus depot.

"They're praying for Gonzales," Goldstein said. "They love him. They love the sonofabitch."

From inside the house, Efrain Gonzales saw a man step out from the cover of the jeeps, standing between the blue of the jeeps. He sighted the rifle and shot, leaning the barrel on Maria's back. He still had her smell on his hands. Cayetano's head rested underneath her, looking up at her feet.

Efrain wiped his face on the girl's skirt and let his head rest for a moment on the soft back of her thigh. One of her calves rubbed between his legs. He took it with his brown hand and pressed it hard against his crotch. Then he vomited on Cayetano's head.

It's only a trembling of the legs, he thought.

They had dragged Jonas to where the dead were laid.

The dead were rested against the jeeps and they looked to Jonas as if they were conversing in the din of the firing. There was a steady firing and he could hear Captain Gomez yelling. Gomez must have gotten the machine-gun, he thought.

From where he lay, he could see the soldiers and the others behind the sandbags and the clearing between the sandbags and the house and the woman hanging out of the window, with her black hair, long, below the red that looked like a *peineta* in her head. The hair moved with the breeze and sometimes with a shot that would tear into the brown back.

He saw Goldstein running in the clearing.

The crazy bastard, he thought.

There was no firing from the house.

Then he saw a white figure running on the hill in back, to the river. Captain Gomez was yelling to the machine gun and Jonas saw Goldstein stop and aim and some green uniforms running. He saw the white figure turn and fall. He felt a wave come up to his head and he closed his eyes.

Then he was looking at Goldstein's face looking at him and he thought, how good he looks; how blue his eyes are. Behind Goldstein, in the clearing, he could see the bodies.

"I could barely stop them," he heard Goldstein say, "they half cut his head off."

"And the girl." He was listening to himself too, now.

"Yes." Goldstein said.

Captain Gomez was driving.

They had made a mattress for Jonas out of the empty ammunition bags. He could see the back of Goldstein's head and the sky and sometimes the mountains. Efrain Gonzales lay next to him in the back of the jeep. The body had been wrapped in burlap, but the material had loosened and the head rolled with the movement of the jeep.

"You O.K. back there, Jonas?" Goldstein's head turned.

"Yes," and louder, "you think it'll rain, Jack?"

"No. You know it doesn't rain in December. You'll be O.K."

Jonas felt the rising wave again and he saw the yellow peak of Poas in the blue sierra, before he closed his eyes.

My hands tremble, compatriot, he thought. Is it the weather on the old bones or the gonorrhea we nourish? Anyway, its a nice day and we can use the rain that's coming.

"And the girl!" he yelled to Goldstein.

"They'll take care of her, Jonas. Take it easy. You'll be O.K." Goldstein put a cigar in his mouth. He bit the tip off and spat it out of the open jeep, into the afternoon.

—David Smith

Four Men From Ninevah

Did you not see them before,
Our pleated robes and long-hanging hair?
Did the rays of the late sun blind you?
Ha, ha, now what do you see?

We were four and you were twenty;
Now we are four more than you!
Who was taken unawares and vanquished?
Ha! Ha! We are from Ninevah!

Now we will take off your lolling heads
And kick them down the road like stones!
You Chaldeans should have stayed with your women!
Ha! Ha! We are from Ninevah!

There is no end to our swords'-thirst;
We will take on all of Chaldea at once!
Too bad we can only shout at the trees:

Ha! Ha! We are from Ninevah!
But these Chaldean trees take up our song
And hurl it back in sudden challenge:
Ninevah! Ninevah! The great green forest
Calls back sharply through the dusk.

Ha, ha, we are from Ninevah.
Now the forest makes no response.
Oh, we are from Ninevah . . . Ninevah . . .
Our song mingles with the gathering dark.

Come, enough gloating! Let us make a fire,
And sit in a circle close to its sides,
Lest we like the bright-eyed wolves
Howl a mad refrain at the moon.

—*Michael Gura*

Hamsin

1

One Saturday, they drove up to see their new house. It was a big house, with a porch on one side of it, and a kind of bridge leading up. There was also a lot of grass around the front and some rose bushes lined up the front wall. They had long thin stems, like tree trunks and at the top they spread out, leafy and blooming. One of the bushes came up to the bridge and a yellow rose was dropping its petals on the floor. The tiles on the bridge looked very white in the sunshine. They knocked on the door and a voice said "Come in," and they went in. There was a big empty hall and the tiles inside were also white. Opposite the main door there was a doorway leading into a room. It was quite dark in there. Mummy and Daddy walked straight in, and said hallo to a man who was sitting on the edge of a bed, smoking a pipe. Miriam couldn't see him too clearly, or the room itself. There was a smell in the room, like cabbage, but not exactly. It wasn't a nice smell. The man smiled and got up. He had grey hair and was wearing a pair of khaki trousers and an undershirt. She could see the hair of his chest coming out the top. It was also grey. He walked and talked very slowly.

"Eliyahu, these are the children, Miriam and Esther," said Mummy.

He smiled again, and said "I saw the painter this week, and he said he can start right away." They started to talk business. Eliyahu had blue eyes with no eyelashes, and very bushy, grey eyebrows. He was wearing sandals, and had grey hair on his toes too. Miriam let go of her sister's hand and looked around the room. It wasn't so dark anymore. The bed was covered with a red cover that dragged to the floor. There was a large brown desk under a window that had some tools on it. The top was scratched. Everything in the room was red. The chairs and sofa had red velvet coverings and there was a red cushion on the floor near the bed. Some shirts were hanging over the chairs and the wardrobe door was open. She quickly turned away from it, and looked back at Eliyahu. He was listening to Daddy and smiling a little.

Miriam asked if she could go and look around the rest of the house. Mummy nodded absently. Her sister followed immediately. The rest of the house was quite empty. There were two other big rooms with high ceilings. The walls of the rooms were painted white. She went in the kitchen. There was an enormous cupboard in the corner. It was so big she could step inside and close the door. On one of the shelves there was some bread that looked old, and some plates and a cup. The cupboard smelled too. The sink was dirty and had rust stains all over it. She inspected the bathroom, and it too was dirty. She wanted to use the toilet very much, but there was something near it that looked like a dead insect.

"I want to go to the toilet," said Esther suddenly.

Miriam said, "Wait till we get home."

"I want to go now," said Esther, ready to cry.

Miriam went back into the room where her parents were and said to her mother, "Mummy, Esther wants to go to the toilet."

"Well then, take her."

"No, you take her," said Miriam, not moving. Her mother looked impatient, but went into the bathroom and seated Esther on the toilet.

"What's that?" asked Esther, pointing to the insect.

"It's only a bug, it can't hurt you," and she added, "What a mess." She asked Miriam if she wanted to go too, and Miriam nodded.

"Well, go on then," said her mother, going out the door.

Miriam wanted to ask Mummy to stay, but she had already disappeared. She flushed the toilet and watched the water go down and come up again, leaving a dark brown rim round the inside. It wasn't so bad after all.

"I'm going outside," she said.

Outside, she stepped off the bridge slowly, but did not step onto the grass.

"Let's play in the grass," said Esther.

"No."

It was only October and there might still be snakes around. She looked up. There was a cat sprawled on a low branch of an old oak.

"Esther," she said, "Look, a cat."

Esther dashed back to the house leaving the door open and called "Mummy, Mummy, there's a cat outside."

"That's right. It belongs to the house. It'll belong to you when you move in." That was Eliyahu.

Esther came back out and said, "Eliyahu says that's our cat."

They approached the tree, making sounds to it. It let them get quite near, then sprang and disappeared into some bushes. They stood staring after it.

"What shall we call it?" said Miriam.

"Maybe it has a name," said Esther.

"It doesn't matter." Then she said very loudly, "We'll call it Pussy."

"Pussy," said Esther. And that was that.

2

The Hamsin was in it's sixth day. A swirling, dry, hot wind that enveloped the earth, stamped with whirlpools of dust that covered everything. It crept under the doors at night, sending doorknobs rattling fiercely, and was up and about before anyone in the morning. It whirled through the unpaved streets with a moan, carrying with it bits of paper ravaged from the town dump and littered corners, colored by newly-formed green leaves torn from trees, bent humbly to the wind on its way. The leaves fluttered in the gutters unfitting, struck blindly at telegraph poles, and entangled in legs and books and hair. People walked in their unseasonable prints and cottons that were not quite aired, their heads bent, squinting at the road in front of them.

In the large classroom, the teacher raised his voice above the faint hiss of air coming through a leak in one of the windows, and the monotonous flapping of a poster that hung loosely on the back wall, and let the class out early. Miriam followed a group that was going to celebrate the unexpected freedom at the corner cafe. The inevitable hustle at home, sweeping and dusting against the weather, and the everpresent chores accumulating and waiting for her return, quickened her pace towards a fizzy drink that came in a thick, chipped glass.

They pulled chairs that grated over the stone floor and crowded around one, small metal table. Uri bought a bag of sunflower seeds, and began cracking them expertly. One by one the seeds were plopped into his mouth and cracked down the middle. Then the shells were spit out, aimed directly at the floor.

("Filthy habits you pick up," her mother said. "It's only an old Arabic custom," said Eliyahu from his corner at the dinner table.)

"My brother says there's going to be a war," said Shlomit who had succumbed to the hypnosis of cracking seeds and was now doing so herself at the other end of the table.

"Na, there isn't going to be any war. The Arabs are dead scared of us," said Avri.

"My father is an officer, and he knows. He's been called up for a month now."

(Her father put up stripes of adhesive tape criss-crossing the windows, and dug a long trench in the back yard, but Eliyahu said there wasn't going to be any war, and even if there was, the best place to stay was in his room, which was below ground level.)

"Who's going to protect us if all the men go into the army?" asked Hannah.

"That's what they're going to the army for, silly. The Arabs will never get here anyway, we're too far from the border."

"Yes, but my father says—" began Miriam.

"Your father doesn't know anything. If you are so scared, why don't you go back where you came from."

There was a silence as heavy as the wind howling outside.

"Just because I wasn't born here, doesn't mean I'm scared, and my father is a doctor that's why he doesn't get called up."

No one answered. She looked down into her drink, concentrating hard on an airbubble floating on top.

(She sat in the middle room doing her homework. From the kitchen Eliyahu's voice droned over the finished meal. "When we first came here, it was all swamp. There was no work except to build your own house. We had a collective chicken farm, and we traded with the Arabs from Oosefia. Where the post office is now, we had a big gate, and kept guard there at night. Those Arabs we traded with by day, stole like hell from us at night. I think the kids still call it the gate . . ." Her parents listened attentively. Her mother was clearing the table now, but Eliyahu went on oblivious of the clutter of china.

She could see her father sitting politely, his elbows folded on the table, a little frown in listening.)

"Miriam, are you coming home?"

She looked up. Shlomit had already picked up her satchel, and the rest were slowly getting up and hovering around, not wanting to be the first to leave.

They started up the hill towards home. They hardly ever talked on the way, but today the silence seemed to be all around. It was so distinct, there seemed to be a great noise. She stopped. Shlomit a few paces ahead stopped also. They looked at one another, listening. The air was quite still. She looked at the trees. Not a branch moved. The branches hung lifelessly, exhausted. She could hear a truck heaving up a road, far away. It's engine roared distant, yet near. There was a sweet smell in the air, familiar, yet for an instant she couldn't quite place it. The sky in its greyness crowded down on them as they stood there in the great silence.

"The Hamsin is over," Miriam said without thinking.

"It's over, It's over," said Shlomit, clapping her hands together.

The Hamsin is over, said the silence hanging over the park.

"And it's going to rain," said Shlomit.

Miriam stretched her arm out, palm up. A large drop landed in the middle of her palm.

"It's raining already," she said, and laughed.

As if waiting for a signal, the rain started down in huge heavy drops, splattering on the road, off the trees, and splashing into the grass. They walked and then they ran. They laughed as they tumbled down the road, awkwardly clutching their satchels, their mouths open. Miriam felt water hit her face coldly and trickle down her neck. Her skirt and blouse stuck to her.

"You're transparent," she shouted at Shlomit madly.

"So are you."

They ran blindly, the dust rising, the air steaming. She inhaled, breathing fast, and the tingling odor of fresh rain mingled with dust went right through her, making her dizzy. They arrived at their street before her house and she said, "My mother will kill me," as Shlomit continued down the street.

Miriam ran all the way down the steps, and over the bridge, and hesitated before the door. Then she opened it gently, and tiptoed in, her shoes leaving wet prints on the white tiles. She let go of the door handle and looked up. Her mother and Eliyahu were standing in the kitchen doorway, opposite each other, talking. Eliyahu's left hand was in his pocket, and his right hand was resting lightly on her mother's waist. Her mother was leaning on the open door, her arms hanging limply at her side.

Miriam looked down, swallowed, and said "I'm home." When she looked up again, both Eliyahu's hands were in his pockets. "They let us out early," she said, and went to her room. She shut the door and sat on her bed looking at the window. The rain was still coming down and the window had steamed up. She went over to it and traced the word "Miriam" on it with her finger. Then she went back and sat on her bed. It felt damp under her. She shifted over.

There was a large damp area on the bed, where she had sat with her wet skirt. I wet the bed, she thought. Then without any warning she began to cry.

Later, she changed her clothes and went back into the kitchen. Her mother was chopping cabbage on the bread board.

"We can't have lunch before Esther gets home," said her mother.

"I'm not hungry," said Miriam.

She sat down at the table, waiting for her mother to speak. Her mother put the cabbage in a pot, ran some water over it, and put in on the gas.

"Where's the cat?" asked Miriam.

"Oh, he's around somewhere, I brought him in out of the rain," said her mother without turning around.

Miriam bent down and looked under the table. "Pussy, Pussy," she called. He wasn't in the kitchen.

"That cat is too old to be called Pussy," she said irritably.

"Well, you named him dear," said her mother. "Will you put the radio on, it's time for the news."

Miriam switched the radio on, and went into the livingroom. The cat was curled up on the couch. She took it up on her lap, and it purred loudly and stretched its paws and claws over her knees. Her mother called sharply from the kitchen.

"Just a minute," she answered.

She put the cat back on the couch and went into the kitchen.

"What's the matter?"

"Shh, the war has started," said her mother.

"Please abide by the rules of your Civil Defense unit," the announcer was saying, "there is no immediate danger to the rest of the country. The Prime Minister said today that our troops are progressing twenty kilometres down the coast—"

The announcer's voice went on with restrained excitement. The pounding in Miriam's head subsided a little. She said, "What shall we do?" then "I'm glad there's a war, we'll show them. They think they can beat us because they are more people."

"Miriam," her mother said sharply, "War is no good for anyone. Never say you are glad for a war. We won't do anything till your father comes home. Stay inside today."

Miriam went slowly into the living room. She sat beside the cat and put her nose on its soft belly. "I don't care, I'm glad, I'm glad," she said softly.

Esther came home. They ate lunch, and listened to the radio for instructions. Miriam wanted her father to come home badly. She tried to think about the war, but couldn't imagine it happening. The fighting was a long way off. The rain stopped, but it remained cloudy and dark, and night came quickly. Her father came home and she could see he was in a bad mood and stayed away from him. At seven o'clock, her mother called them to supper, and they went and washed their hands in the kitchen sink. Her father said, "Miriam, go down and tell Eliyahu supper's ready."

She sat down in her chair and said "I don't want to."

"What do you mean, you don't want to," said her father quietly.

"I don't want Eliyahu to come to supper," she said stubbornly, fingering her fork, pressing the sharp edge into her palm.

"We decide who is coming and who is not, in this house," said her father.

She squinted at her palm examining four little red spots that appeared on it.

"I'll go," volunteered Esther.

No one answered. She went, slamming the door.

Miriam's father said, "I'll talk to you later, you'd better behave now"– and as he heard the door, called, "Eliyahu, come in, come in, we're just getting started."

They all sat down and passed each other the salad bowl. Her mother poured tea in each cup and said, "I think I got the eggs right, five minutes for Eliyahu, four for Daddy and three for the rest of us." No one smiled.

Esther said, "Daddy, what do we do in the war?"

Her father chipped the top of his egg off with his knife and said, "We don't do anything. We sit and wait to see how many people get killed on both sides."

"I take it you aren't too pleased with the decision to attack," said Eliyahu smiling a little. His eyes were cold and half closed.

"I certainly am not. Worst decision they could make," said her father coldly.

"You don't think we have a right to defend ourselves against invasion and border attacks?"

"I don't think it's anything we couldn't settle around a table, and besides, defending borders doesn't necessarily mean a full scale war. Silly fools," said her father vehemently.

"Oh come now, dear, you know peace talks haven't helped in years. Eliyahu is right you know," said her mother.

"We should have done this ages ago," said Eliyahu. "A quick kick in the behind, that's all they need."

Miriam stared at her father. She felt suddenly cold.

"I'm telling you, killing people isn't the answer. I've been through enough wars. This isn't what we founded this state for. We wanted to live in peace, not turn into war mongers. Killing off all our young men with a war every ten years. Everything we take will have to be given back, you know that."

He was shouting now. Miriam saw his fist all tight, ready to bounce off the table.

"This is 1956, have you forgotten 1945, and 1948? Do you think the Arabs will just let us take their land? I tell you, we had no right, no right to do this."

Eliyahu said in his low voice, "I'm not forgetting anything. No one is. This is a question of more than just lands. How long do you think we're going to be humiliated like this, just taking it? We have to show them once and for all that we're here to stay. No sir, I'm not forgetting 1945. That's why we have to fight back now. If you don't see it, then your mind is still in 1945."

Her father didn't answer. He took a sip of tea and his hand was shaking.

He said, "I don't want to argue about it."

"You can't argue about it, that's why," said Eliyahu cooly, and smiled again.

"I have my reasons," said her father looking down at his plate.

Miriam gazed horrified at him. She waited for him to speak, but he sat there, staring at his plate. Eliyahu was looking at him with half closed eyes.

"Dad is right," she said loudly, trembling. "This war is for nothing. We don't need it. We're all going to get killed."

She stopped, aware of the silence around her.

"You keep out of this," said her father suddenly furious.

"I don't care. Eliyahu doesn't care who gets killed. He doesn't have a family."

"Miriam. Stop that at once!"

She stopped.

"Leave the table."

She raised her eyes to her father's and said, "First tell Eliyahu to go!"

Her father slapped her across the face. It hurt and she felt the tears close to her eyes. She tried not to cry. She looked down and blinked once or twice, but knew it was no good. A huge sob accompanied by a burst of tears, was slowly climbing her chest. She let it come, closing her eyes. The tears squeezed through and ran down to her mouth. Her mouth puckered and she pushed her chair back, spilling it to the floor. Without looking up, she ran out the front door. The sky had cleared, and the moon sent a glow over the garden.

—Judith E. Levy

UNTITLED/Yehuda Amichai

A translation from the Hebrew

My mother baked me the whole world
In sweet cakes.
My love filled my window
With raisined stars.
And the longings are close in me as air bubbles
In a loaf of bread.
On the outside, I am smooth and silent and brown.
The world loves me.
But my hair is sad as weeds in a drying swamp.
All the rare and beautiful feathered birds
Flee from me.

—Judith E. Levy

The Eastern Seaboard

I

The same only light that draws all sleepless to the seacliffs
as early as March: glow worms, who do not know winter from Spring

by temperature, who come and who go with the season
with only a feel for timing, not with reason.

But what will come from this light that was not storm-outlined
or windfanned or tide-roughened and translated
from shape into form? I bring it back as ashes
and as cold—and I hate the cold—and as serpentine flashes

And I think: who will listen to this at morning?
I would impose if I wake at dawn those who are sleeping
for this: while you slept, I touched with my wonder
the burrowing lightning that has no thunder.

II

Turning, they seem to be posies on the lacquered tin where I keep sugar—
it is the only precious thing but my cameo necklace,
and that is lost. My grandfather gave it to me.
He made his own wine, and cautioned me
about marriage and heavy dumpling dishes, and he died
in an upstairs bedroom I had never seen
until time to divide the remains. It was at the end
of a staircase that he told me went to the stars,
and I believed him, until I climbed it to see him dead.

The tin was what I took. I don't remember him,
the shopkeep shadow, the bent old Jew
escaped in time out of Poland to here. To here,
with his harridan and his little valuables,
and his cracked cantor voice that she denied him.
I could have had the sweater he kept cold shop in;
I have grace enough to wear it, if I had grounds,
and a Bouvier de Flandres on a long leash. I would photograph well
with the grey sweater tied over my shoulders. I have seen
people take things like that. I have taken nothing
but the posie tin and the cameo,
but that was a gift.

III

The dark girl was surely dying. In her eyes
that certain colour lurked. Her hairline was receding
behind her small ears; I watched it losing colour in long waves
on the pillow, lightening and growing thinner.
Her cheeks strained inward.
She could have been
the daughter of her harridan grandmother,
her eyes grew so big and so angry. She would have made,
before, a fair Israeli border guard, having been strong and able,
before. She, who had loved all sensual feel,
could not eat, could not sleep, was fretful, had forgotten
how it is to run through woods on bare paths,
to skip stones on the bay, to lie on her brown stomach,
beneath the exposed roots of a shore box elder, to watch
the lizards, and make a story about how they run and stop and run
in their strange front yard.

There was one day before twilight,
when an orange butterfly came out of the off-beach forest
and stopped on her hand. He closed up his wings and was silent,
closed himself up, as she could do, and I heard her whisper to it,
but not the words clear.
And the butterfly flew away in his fast circles.

She grew tired; there was not much left of her
in the room with no view of the water.
The little brown girl who shared the room
spent hours combing the dying hair, making designs.
She accepted it in silence,
because it was nearly time for both of them to circle away,
one flying, one walking beside and whispering,
thinking we would not hear. And we did not hear.

IV

Children are of course concerned with historicity,
do not care to know, but draw pictures
to be found on bits of fly-leaf in old houses.
So we can find her butterflies
where her god knows were never flying creatures
except those which fly out of nightmare into waking.

There, before the heat was unbearable,
she found fireflies and butterflies
and drew them in dry wheatfields—
where the wind had burned out all growing.
See what the dark child lay down: little pieces of picture,
a doll made of silk and of china. (The hands that formed
the doll surely left something of handcraft within it.)
And she, who was made at midnight,
by which dark nothing is given that is not taken,
left record, because she was after the illusion of butterflies,
leaving herself on fly-leaf, in messages, saying:
love the butterfly that blocks the sunlight, saying:
have you heard it singing to me? It is a clear thing.

Shall we say, because we will not get again
into her saying: Child, these are words to tell you:
we found charred pictures and your china doll;
you left them, I think, when the heat grew unbearable;
shall we say it, into memory? Can we remember
the answer, when it comes from so long away? My sister, tell me,
where in the dead field did you find things growing
to give us back butterflies out of this mystery?

V

It may be, beyond the tales of the rhythm of roses,
that her skin has indeed paled and then faded,
and that there is not much left at all to feed the roots,
now that the heavy heat has come and the rain is gone.

But we should not think of that, because of the rainstone-
tombstone alluding to waters and watering places;
we think we should think of refreshment, not of erosion
of water on what, it was promised, would not be broken.

—L. S. Gordon

Saga

Does it really matter
how long ago the hills
have howled the wolves away,

or how many days of
snowing snowing snowing
it takes to spell whiteness?

Numbers go on to infinity
with such absurd finality.
But my grandfather's thinking

stirs in my cells, softly
—an inkling of elk—
and I know there are still

blond gods in the birches
where green glaciers
grow into rivers. There are
wolves and elves and
whiteness, and
I am heathen in heather.

—*Siv Cedering Fox*

WHEN I WALK WITH EMPLANEAR IN THE WOODS

When I walk with Emplanear in the woods,
All the world is still before our passage.
The trees with all their winding limbs,
Stock-still, drop over us their shade.

—*Michael Gura*

The Anchorite at the Cello

Just as the teeth with tender pressure savor
The sweet juice of the yielding fruit, so this
Bowstring's tender pressure 'gainst the cello's board
Will squeeze the ripest juice of melody;
Or like the tree which sweats sap as it burgeons
In the spring, so sweats the sap of song along
This fingerboard which burgeons into sound.
The clouds have blushed shame-faced before the lightness
Of my harmonies; the deep well which stirs
At intervals with the leaf-shaken dew
Sends not forth from her dark recess so fine
And volatile a tone to couple these,
Nor with her spreading circles circumscribes
The widening arcs of worship born by these.

How often have I started when I saw
My own frail form outlined against the folds
Of this poor robe, and all those centuries
Which dragged this complex body into being:
But not even then would I be content
To lose the voluptuary sweetness
Of my body: for every prayer would play
About my lips as if I sucked from some
Soothing breast the milk of incantation.

What can they who inhabit the mountain
Caves, who bind their loins with coarsest cloth
And make their pillows the indignant stone
(Hoping thus for the furtherance of the soul)
Know of the lover's bed, the tragedy
Which comes when the unwilling limbs no more
Together throb?—the aching want which lingers
When all subsides, and the pulsating fingers
Feel the presence of a foreign ebb and flow
Of hearts which surge in their separate woe.
Know they the greatest bliss, to discover
One's soul reflected in another's eyes?
Or weep they on the sorrow found therein:
Loving that which must perish—still to stand
Having the courage to affirm that love.
What sympathy, purported souls as wide
As the world's misery, have you for man?
Why dwell so long on the rude crown of thorns

And severed side: couched in body's sense
Desire can create being where none
Exists. Why linger with the afflicted
Palm, when the ripe juices of melody,
The ardent eyes which speak through sculptured stone,
The oozy words we suckle in our woe
Point to deliverance, not merely pledged
By God but planned by man—they linger with
The thorn, I leap as to the long-awaited
Trumpet.

Again the solo cello sounds
Disturbing silence to rouse itself again
And fill the void which always closes in.
The wailful woods drop eviserate birds;
The shifting embers of the smouldered skies
Protract my hopes with unreclaiming gleams;
The crevices add tongues to every wind
And conjure phantoms from the dim-lit walls.
What brought this melody to mind, that I
So nimbly finger? years ago I saw
A beggar rummage through discarded trash
And laborers with sweaty brows and work
Creased hands—and some dishevelled woman lead
Her crying children through the street and beat
Them till they'd sing and gather in their cups
Whatever fortune or strangers could afford.
Out of these grew this melody I play,
And as it then confronted chaos, let
It now distill its succulence, until
The final trumpet begin where I must end.

—*Stephen Gurney*

Reflections on the Death of Martin Luther King

I

I sit and listen to Brahms' Requiem
On this Palm Sunday with my curtains drawn,
Or glance at Blake's "Four Zoas", while the dun
Shadows of evening trail across the lawn;
Somewhere in town they're burning down a slum
While soldiers stare irresolutely on
And looters carry out armfulls of food:
Yet all this cannot pierce King's solitude.

Yet was it waste expenditure of breath
To quote Isaiah in the city streets?
Most surely not although it brought his death;
Though all his followers danced to the beats
Of his ponderous syllables—what faith
Now moves them to destroy their foul retreats
And throw this country's conscience in our face
While we sit back and witness this disgrace.

Why is it we expect their gratitude
Withholding life's necessities until
It seems to them a morselfull of food
A visionary treat of Heaven's will;
Yet we in comfort live in one calm mood
And in this heedless posture gladly kill
All passion till we've but our ordered lives
And worry what to wear to please our wives.

Yet they've the passion which breaks windowpanes,
A kind of frenzy King had tried to turn
Into an expectation for those plains
Isaiah prophesized—though now there burn
Desolate fires lit by heated brains:
What's worse?—we weakly men who will not yearn
With all our passion for the final day
Or those passionate negroes we betray?

And so it comes to this, whether or not
It had been fully realized by King;
He had that staunch nobility of thought,
A soul that sounded like a tightened string;
Yet what could such as he do being caught
Within these modern discords—could he wring
From souls so slack, both black and white, a chord
Which only souls like his have ever heard?

I place King next to men like Blake or Yeats
Whose visionary energy extends
Beyond the time which fostered their debates,
Beyond the age they shaped to meet their ends;
I am convinced that this world sits and waits
For such as they to bring what God portends,
And yet they dream mere dreams as in a tomb
And like Christ wait for the third day to come.

II

Though it may seem a perverse pride,
There is a triumph that I feel
In watching all the countryside
In midst of this wild havoc reel.

An abstract joy bursts from my heart
In witnessing the summoned troops,
Or one fire another start,
Or looters flee in fumbling groups.

They dance a wild destructive dance,
A kind that sets the world afire
As if we're all caught in a trance
And earth a block to our desire.

III

I climb the lone cathedral of my mind,
And listen to a fugue arranged by Bach,
And wonder at the strength
Exerted by the organ keys to bind
The unfettered winds until they somehow lock
In music's measured length;
Measure on measure dilates
Measure on measure expands,
I wonder at those hands
Which never pause to hear what wind relates.

Thus with these dreams I fill my idle hours,
And fit the raging winds into a pipe
On which my organ soul
Can build in sound those soul-sheltering towers
Where lone men sit till melodies grow ripe
And hearts at last are full;
Oh must those men like King
Who would let loose their tones
To soothe a nation's groans
But break their voice the more they try to sing?

The sculptor freezing stone into a posture
Expressive of the conflicts in his soul,
At last must turn to stone
And freeze beneath the earth into a posture
Shaped by no hand, but plunged into a hole
With verdure overgrown;
Must men like King who form
Responses and not stone
Expire in a groan,
With no response save that to feed the worm?

IV

Christ sleeps in his sepulchre—all is still;
The imagination of man sleeps and will
Not rouse itself until the final day;
Around King's grave our dreams array:
Were his imaginings the less than those
Who imaged forth our future state
In works of art and felt the great
Promptings of he whose will their words disclose?

King sleeps in his sepulchre—all is still;
The aimless winds will hollow out the hill,
And yet the organ pipe of dream plays on.
Inside the sepulchre is drawn
The dreams of prophets who had gone before;
I, in my sepulchre repeat
The words which on King's tomb shall beat
Until they roll the rock from out the door.

And not till then shall my dreams be appeased,
Like surfacing divers whose lungs are eased
By bursting breaths of air, our souls shall rise
Eased by one another's eyes . . .
Yet now my thought flies forward—again be still;
Array the walls of every tomb
Until the final day shall come
And men like King proclaim the Heaven's will.

—*Stephen Gurney*

In Memorial: The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.

Your casket's the lodestone that draws on public praise
Throughout a somber land bereft of cheer,
Where violence slanders what's left of cherished ways,
And soldiers subjugate a lawless fear.
"I have a dream," O Lord, "I have a dream"
In the North and the South and the East and the West,
Where attitudes are seldom what they seem,
And all the worst of these distort the best.
The cry of "freedom now" pulls everyone
Toward that metal buried in the earth,
Yet how many comprehend the liberation
Sought after by those who undergo rebirth?
Alike with poets and prophets, the deaf and dumb
Are joined to the chorus, "We shall overcome."

—*Gary Imlay*

Purgatorial

The trees were over ripe or over dead
and no one was answering. "Mama," she said,
'it's grown water-puffed and white, my head,
and it rolls on my pillow, and my pillow's red."

I wear my coat to write. The room is cold.
All that could shape and order is grown old.
There was an answerer, I have been told,
but his mouth was clamped and all his answers sold.

Grief would be better; the stars could die
or the grass break. But only my nightmares lie
and dissolve into dawn where no winter-birds cry,
but they seem to wait; I seem to see them fly.

But that is no hope; that is the tired head-turning
away from the vision of the world's long burning;
that is the fear to hear what the dream said:
Decay is between you and the decaying dead.

—*L. S. Gordon*

Ruffles and Flourishes

". . . this is the song of the Great
Loneliness that creeps in like the desert
wind and dehydrates the soul. . . ."

JAMES JONES in
From Here To Eternity

I

It is dusk in the harbor, a typical Sicilian dusk for April, sinking down as steadily and as imperceptibly as the rain. The ship is tied up alongside a bleak pier upon which squat decrepit wooden buildings and warehouses. The water smells of oil, garbage and stagnation and the mist-rain holds the stench and the smells loiter around the ship as faithfully as the squalid garbage scows that flock beneath the trash chutes at the stern of the big cruiser. Sterile light from the ship's bridge diffuses into the murk quickly and is lost for the most part, leaving only a faint shine far up in the superstructure. Even the lines of the ship are dim in the overwhelming gray. Things are covered with canvas on the deck, the faint line of a sponson sticks out from the ship without dimension. The stretch of white lifeline along the deck is only a shadow. Imperceptible. Like the rain and the beginning of night and the ghostly scows beneath the fantail.

Abruptly, out of tune, the bugle for First Call To Colors splits the oppressive air, splits it for a second, a fleeting stacatto instant, and is gone leaving the ear startled, doubting that it has heard anything at all. A hatch bangs somewhere on the ship. Voices. Silence. Then two Marines walk by, quickness and pomp in their steps as they move toward the bow of the ship to pull the Jack. Far aft two others move along the deck toward the stern where the Ensign, soaked, droops over the fantail.

Forward, the Marines reach the Jack Staff. One is a private and has no stripes on his raincoat. He stands with his feet apart, his hands clasped behind him, leaning lightly against the staff, where the port and starboard lifelines meet. Using the Windless Room hatch as a shield from the bridge, the other, a corporal, cups a snuck cigarette and talks in a lowered voice to the private. He holds the smoke in his lungs as long as he can as he talks and when it does come out it is lost easily, irrevocably into the misty halflight.

"Palermo," spits the corporal, "this goddam ship's been going downhill since we left the film festival at Cannes, but this Palermo has got to be the bottom."

Beads of moisture are already forming on the burnished visor of his cap and his hair, below the cap, glistens from the dampness.

"Jesus," he continues after a quick duck to draw on the cigarette, "I thought Livorno was bad, everybody catching the bull clap and the crabs, but goddam, Palermo!" His face twists as he flings the souring word as one might spit, leaning into a commode, to clear the taste of vomit. "Palermo! Nothing here but shit and trenchmouth."

The private nods, looks past the corporal to the green and white signal pennants that shoulder the nebulous lights on the bridge. They droop, sickly, motionless shadows.

"What time?"

"Two minutes yet," the corporal says, glancing at his watch. "Relax."

But the private turns anyway and loosens the halyard.

"You know the brig is probably going to open up tonight, don't you?" asks the corporal.

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. We'll get the kid. I'm pretty sure of that."

"The kid?" asks the private. "You mean Diamond?"

"Yeah. Diamond. The kid. Sgt. Bender says he was talking to the XO and they're going to throw the book at him. Stupid-ass ape."

Stupid-ass ape. The private remembers the kid moaning, sobbing, half strangled, tortured by the rolls of the liberty launch as it sped through the choppy bay toward the ship anchored offshore. That was in Famagusta where the Heavy Cruiser drew too much water to navigate the harbor and instead anchored a mile out. The kid writhed on the stretcher, a damp, ointment-soaked cloth covering the wound, the horrible wound that opened his face like torn banana skin.

"You'd think that once in a while we'd be able to keep that brig closed," whines the corporal, "maybe just for a week. But no . . . assholes like the kid. So it's back to the rotten brig again. Same old shit. Twelve-to-Four, Four-to-Eight, Eight-to-Twelve. Chasing prisoners, writing goddam log books. Just once I'd like to be able to last an entire week without having to think of that goddam brig."

Stupid-ass ape, thinks the private. He remembers the kid suffering terribly, not even fortunate enough for delerium. Agony all the way from the great uproar in the bar through the slow narrow streets, his buddies carrying him, the unbearable wait at the fleet landing where at last, at least, a stretcher was found, and then the long ride home. Nightmare of pain. The private, almost feeling it, shudders.

"Stupid-ass ape," he tells the corporal.

"Yeah." The corporal nods, flings the spent cigarette down and crushes it with his toe.

It appears darker now and the corporal glances at his watch and grows serious. The private stands tense, as though the lowery evening has suddenly become electric.

Down, as though hurled by God, the signal pennants fall, their tips arcing

up. The private yanks hard on the halyard and the Jack leaps down halfway. The bugle is calling now and the private brings the Jack the rest of the way down slowly, matching the metronome set by the call. The corporal stands stiff, rendering a hand salute. As the last note of To The Colors fades, the blue cloth of the Jack touches the private's fingers and the corporal cuts his salute, snapping his hand smartly to his side. The private unhooks the Jack and folds it. Tucking it under his arm, the two of them move aft.

II

Behind the dark mahogany podium towers Captain Ellis. One by one, for the last forty-five minutes, the men on report have stood before him, most of them cases of mere drunkeness. There remains only Diamond, who now stands hesitantly before the overpowering Captain. Pads of dressing spread over the kid's face, outlined by the saffron stain of antiseptic. The skin along his neck is the raw, rash-red of a healing burn. The Captain's Lobby is austere and the light, artificial, reflects harsh highlights from the resplendant teakwood deck.

Captain Ellis is just as angry now, just as disgusted, as when he had first learned of the incident in Famagusta two weeks ago. The Legal Clerk is reading aloud the charges and the older sailors towards the back of the Lobby shake their heads. It is embarrassing for them to think that the kid is even associated with their uniform.

". . . that on March 22, 1962, Seaman Apprentice William B. Diamond, United States Navy, 521448789, did enter the Roca Café in Famagusta, Cyprus and did knowledgeably conduct himself in a disorderly manner. . . ."

The Clerk drones mechanically on, impersonally, monotonously listing the facts without recreating any part of them so that the Captain's mind wanders, his imagination working for the apathetic voice. He pictures the Roca Café—bar it should be—dark corner of a building, pungent with the scent of stale urine and sweat. Maybe a few rooms upstairs where the girls could take the men. There would be a few girls, haggard, poor, working under constant fear of being discovered by the authorities and sentenced to the Walled City to serve as concubines for the Turkish Army.

He thinks of Diamond blustering in, a wild drunken flush flung recklessly across insolent features. His buddies hesitate, crowding the doorway as though to run. He turns to them, motions belligerently for them to enter. They laugh. One jeers. He leaves them, stumbles deeper into the sudden quiet. He doesn't need them. He's done the trick a million times before. Yanking his cigarette lighter from his pocket, he thrusts it out arm's length and flicks it lit. Tight cords distort his neck and he violently spews the mouthful of lighter fluid at the flame. Like napalm it flashes into a vermillon fire ball. But he has spit too slow. Too late, his eyes bulging large, Diamond falters back as though to escape but almost instantaneous with the fire ball, there is a flashing tongue of flame that strikes across the gap and a second explosion right in the kid's mouth. There is a horrible sound—the actual rending of flesh—as Diamond's

whole head ignites in a wild blood-red dazzle that illuminates the blue of his uniform all the way down to the elbows.

". . . not only did the accused willfully endanger his own life but also the lives of innocent bystanders and the property of both the above mentioned A. H. Khahil, owner of the Roca Café, and that of the United States Government. . . . "

Through metal bulkheads Captain Ellis hears First Call To Colors.

". . . behavior of the accused not only disturbed peace and order but also that it publicly degraded both the United States Naval uniform which the accused was wearing, and the accused himself as the wearer of said uniform. It is the feeling of the Investigating Officer. . . ."

The bugle is muffled, subdued, lacks insistance.

The Clerk is closing the manila folder, retiring. The Ship's Doctor comes forward and reports the kid's physical condition, protocol prior to sentencing.

Captain Ellis doesn't listen to the doctor, doesn't want to. He remembers their conversation last week in the Sick Bay Office.

"Something is wrong with him, sir." The Doctor, sitting on his desk, one foot swinging, lights his pipe, gesticulating towards the ward with the burnt match and speaking between puffs. "I sincerely believe that he needs a psychiatrist."

"Psychiatrist hell, Frank! Shit, we all need psychiatrists. He needs the brig, that's what he needs."

"I wish it were that simple, sir," shrugs the Doctor, his voice trailing. He is a young man, not far removed from medical school. He absently picks up a deskside picture of his wife and two kids and stares at it.

"It *is* that simple, Frank. If this kid needs psychiatric attention, let my Marines analyse him down in the 'hotel.' Best psychology in the world." He gives a short appreciative laugh. "Not many of these guys go down there a second time. It straightens them out in a hurry."

The doctor is still talking, dragging the thing out. Captain Ellis hears Colors go and his mind rambles to thoughts of tonight's dinner at the Embassy. At last the Doctor finishes and the Captain impatiently nods.

Now only Diamond stands before the podium. It is not his first time, the Captain knows. He's been there before. Captain Ellis stares hard at the kid. He grips the podium, his knuckles whitening. The kid shuffles, embarrassed under the probing stare.

"Three days," says the Captain, pausing for the impact to register in the kid's eyes. When it does, he adds, as though an afterthought, "bread and water."

III

There is a pervasive chill in the brig, more desolate than the gloom and the night and the rain topside. The brig office is well lighted but the two cells that meet the office in a Greek cross are dark, without light. Two Marines hustle the kid into the Starboard cell for initiation. Astonishment pulls the

kid's face to gray distortion, the stitches hurting. The Marine's fists lift him up on tiptoe. Everything shifts like a kaleidoscope and he feels it all from way back in a slow second that goes fast. The Golden Gloves negro pumping big arms into him and him not feeling it anymore. Not anymore. Nothing except the ropes rocking him and the far off thunder of the wild Madison Square crowd and the tight want to get off the ropes flashing like shattering glass in his mind and the peaceful, silent haze of the canvas reaching up to embrace him.

Vomit on the metal deck. The Marines smile, satisfied. His lunch is gone. Three and a quarter days bread and water. They make him clean up the vomit with his shirt. Beneath dirty bandages his stitches bleed slowly, sticky, clotting.

"Put your goddam shirt on."

Unceremoniously, they yank him out of the Starboard cell. He stands, unsteady, blinking into the merciless light of the office. One of the sentries hands him a rag and a can of metal polish and pushes him into the Port cell. All of the paint has been chipped off the bulkheads and the deck and they shine dimly in the darkness. The kid stumbles to the far corner and begins. His teeth are set hard but he can't cry. He rubs the polish in small circles. His shirt clings to him and he can smell the acrid vomit.

Three days. *Three days.* Time loses all semblance of motion, squats immovably beside him in the twilight.

From the darkness above, a bead of water drops into his hair and purls down his neck, behind his ear. Another. There is a little puddle on the deck. The kid squints up. Obscure in the unreflecting gloom, he can barely distinguish the broad stripes of the Ensign. Cramped for space, the Marines have brought the Colors to the brig to dry. They hang, spread over pipes, dripping. Red, White and Blue.

The kid works on, huddled in the cell. In darkness, the soaked flag broods over him. He is crying now, silently, unblinking. Rainwater falls from the flag, wets him caressingly, and he pretends that America is crying for him.

—Edwin A. Williams III

Suicide

Under a burning light bulb
shining on the face of the *Washington Post*, A-1,
the round multi-legged reddish bug
crawls faster and faster in
egg-shapes,
broken leaf-shapes,
squashed bigger-bug shapes,
senselessly faster under the
headachy desk lamp
eight
broom
sweeps
from the darkened sink of warm water
in which my life sluggishly flows
like coffee gent-
ly spurting into a glass percolater—
but that would have been morning,
and even the bug will be gone by then.

—*Bart Gruzalski*

When he brings her a rose,
she laughs it off saying, be careful, hon,

single roses look like love. To his poem
of moist caresses, she tells him (honest)

your mind's always on sex, you ass.
Besides, you know, we're drifting

apart. I don't like the way things are
going. I'm bored. So be on time,

and none of your happy horseshit.

She curls her hair, curls under
her feet, waiting for lasagna to bake,

waiting near the fragile rose,
waiting for him to be late, though once

he doesn't return,
ever.

—*Bart Gruzalski*

Plato's Cave . . . Today

Deep in the crevices of the earth
the twenty-three-year-old spelunker sits,
slooping forward,
his head resting on the boulder before him,
pensive in this matter of conquest,
this drifting search after the success of some "unknown test,"
this matter of self-mastery
(once he'd tasted the easy caves)
gambled his lust for sunlight
against a smokey white carbide flame,
gambled the warmth of tender caresses against
constant temperature,
gambled the moistness of womanhood against
steady humidity,
gambled on a sureness of foot over
boulders that became
t-o-o
slippery
trapping him in this (temperature-steady humidity-constant)
silence
that even after ten years
his carbide lamp sheathed in soft rust
(his leaden face now manuscript brittle)
that even after ten years
scientifically preserves
one arm limp on the boulder ahead
both legs twisted tight in a fissure below
(half-sitting),
the ten years leisurely wrinkling
a brow bent in quest
of self-
mastery
sought
in temperature-steady (humidity-constant) vaults
of air-conditioned darkness.

—*Bart Gruzalski*

ARTIST OF THE 60's

He looked away from the saran-wrapped bodies lined along the runway. Paul could never get used to seeing them packaged for shipment. Looking at them he saw a butcher shop where the veal is plasticed to keep the blood from getting on your fingers.

Paul took a drag from the cigarette he no longer knew he was smoking. His eyes, the colors divided themselves into basic blends and minute additions last circle of barbed wire. He sorted out the various shades of green. Behind his eyes, the colors divided themselves into basic blends and minute additions of powdered pigment. When his unit was replaced, the colors would come together again but they would no longer be a part of a battle scene. The greens would become a background for that instant of perception which makes the viewer's heart skip a beat in awe of the artist's sensitivity and skill.

The artist was in the world of pallet and brush and willing canvas until a shout from the sergeant put his rifle in his hand. His feet were now two in a line of twenty moving down the slope and through the wire. Paul was at the head of this caterpillar which finally edged and inched its way back into the jungle from which it must have once crawled. His eyes were always put near the front of columns since they had a talent for focusing upon the unusual in his surroundings—the quietly beautiful or the quietly sinister. If a muzzle flashed orange upon that sphere of green in which the jungle wraps a man, the sniper's position was no longer a hiding place. Paul's eyes closed a little more each time he pointed to the place where a man would die.

After three hours, the head of the worm broke out from the jungle's mesh into a village clearing. The village women stood with crossed arms and animal's eyes as the twenty feet moved among the huts. Paul held back the cloth door to a house of grass. A woman of fifteen looked up from her child. Her body was dressed in the soft nudity which fills the artist's dreams.

Red on black—an orchid in her hair. Through the window—orange on green.

* * *

Five doctors stood around the heap of white towels and sheets which covered the body. Covered all of the body except one unswaddled patch. There was a circle five inches in radius which exposed the patient's left eye. The flesh had been slit and peeled back leaving the white eyeball set upon a pedestal of bared muscle. The ten eyes of the doctors and the sixteen eyes of the interested technicians were focused upon the circle of scarlet and white. With all their mechanical skill and knowledge, this single lens might be repaired to half efficiency.

* * *

The nurse brought a fresh glass of water to the bedside. She kept her eyes turned away from the massive scars and that one eye which stared always at the blur of light which the mind knew was a window. It knew there was a window but it could not distinguish the four separate panes which threw the shadow of their frame strikingly on the white sheets of his bed.

When the nurse was three rooms away and more comfortable, the glass shattered and the eye closed.

—James Rada

Memories

I have thought that I could stand, a pillar
Supporting the architrave of "the good",
Or rest as a pool whose margins are stiller
Than the quiet leaves of a windless wood,
I had thought that I alone have been the tiller
Of my separate course on life's dark flood:
But the patterns of pain and human care
Run as my listless fingers through my hair.

All this has made me seek a firmer hold
Free from the self-delightings of a boy,
To weep with saint or over miser's gold
To dwell on beggar's shoes or children's toy,
I think of Homer as a suited mold
To cry with all men or to laugh with joy:
Generations of love's complexities
Bow down my head, pull up my folded knees.

I have seen those who used to cheer the fire
With talk of politics, forgotten love,
Now sitting in their time-begotten ire
As on a raft which life's dull waters move,
And there have been those who thought they were higher
Than all the petty lives which round them strove,
Whose self-deluding pride had brought them low
By making man a means on which they'd grow.

And such a one I will recount in song,
One who must seem my bitterest enemy,
Entangled in the traps of right and wrong
We shook contempt, as leaves the autumn tree,
He numbered ills and thought that he'd belong
To God's supreme and holy family:
But life has left him lonely in the cage
Of his own proud and undiscerning rage.

I sit among the bench-warmers who gape
Upon the sidelines of the struggling scene,
Content in their own sitting, while the scrape
Renumerates on love's ancestral spleen;
We neither move nor budge, nor can escape
As spring cannot escape the spreading green;

Cannot escape, although the mournful fall
Suspends our life upon the raven's call.

But once again I feel that changeless theme
Which troubled my heart since the days of youth,
All those around me, friends or lovers, dream
Misplacing good intentions, simple truth;
Deluded by themselves, the endless scheme
Of generation's pattern files its tooth
Draining from our hearts, while we as before
Beat out our lives, as waves upon the shore.

I wanted those I've know to reunite
Above the circumstantial wants of day,
And in the darkness of the soul, when night
But shows one star, one solitary ray,
And motion ceases save the inward flight
Above the pulse of birth, death and decay,
In one another's being find an end
In one another's arms to reascend. —*Stephen Gurney*

The Shrine

Written in memory of W. B. Yeats

Because I am torn between the passing and the coming,
The swan and the hawk,
Talon and dying song,
I chant without song in this hallowed shrine,
Where there is little that is not
Immutable as the changing scriptures,
Marks of past in present;
And praise chryselephantine statues,
Staid figures,
Ivory carved from raging elephant
In gold of eternal moment.

Sanctify the symbol and the voice,
The Law and the Word.
Let them be understood
As golden ivory, singing raptures
Calm and lingering,
The choice
Of what is and what is not
The hawk and swan. —*Gary Imlay*

The Owl

Such a splendid bursting reign of joy,
On a quilt of varicolored flowers,
A sunlit passion-play beneath the watching owl, who says:
    There is a gray fountain in a walled courtyard,
    Streaming dark ether in the shadows,
    And a purple sky overhead,
    A purple sky overhead.

Your streaming hair garlanded with flowers,
Your smooth shoulder like a taut bow;
And the owl blinks its yellow eyes, and says:
    A cherub stands in the fountain;
    His eyes are blank and dead,
    A cherub with a round arm poised over his head,
    An arm poised over his head.

Slow knives slice at the day;
Dead flowers rattle like drums across my long shadow;
And the owl blinks its eyes, and says:
    The cherub watches the ravished wall;
    He holds a stone arrow at his side,
    Tipped with purple twilight,
    Purple twilight.

Tomorrow I shall see her again;
At this very spot I shall clasp her again;
The owl hoots overhead, and says:
    There is a gray fountain in a walled courtyard;
    There the air is sharp as ammonia;
    A gray stone cherub stands in the fountain,
    And his eyes are fixed and dead.

—*Michael Gura*

Nubia

on the stone
yellow gneiss
there where the market
had pitched in the hub
of chatter
a niggerold nubian sits
diply spraying
his collection of
petrified hippos
grey granite eyes
wet tipped
with coffeed foam
turn to the nile
to watch his black-veiled
woman
carry her earthenware
pitcher
down to the river

—*Ed Baker*

Perversion

Why does everyone
read only Lawrence's animal poems?

Why is it, with
my left nostil clear,

My mind keeps coming back
to the clogged right one?

—*Bart Gruzalski*

Mary

Mary, not of my own,
And yet mine, too.
A simple vision shared.
A muffled dread shudders
Down the pendulum,
Vibrating danger.

Through my thoughts
A brown bird glides
Chanting "Mary, Mary"
In minor key.

Veering sharply,
He hurls himself through glass
That preserved the heart.
Shaking free,
The brown bird whirs his wings
Once more in flight.

Within the heart
The spring is loosed,
A warmth remembered.
The clock falls from
Uneasy balance
Into still slumber.
Drawn to the heart,
The bird sails swiftly in,
Feathers fluffed,
Leg tucked up,
He ducks his head
In sleep.

—*Virginia McFee*

IN THE EMERGENCY ROOM/a love story

In the emergency room the heavy Negro woman lies stretched on the hard white sheet, wriggling. Backwards on her path of blood, by the curtain, by the passive nurse, by the preoccupied white doctor and his gauze and sterile tools, backwards onto the husband, Puerto Rican in his paint-spattered coveralls, shaking and skinny, standing in one spot with his hands in his hair, saying, "The window, the window, her face through the glass, my foot on the brakes. . . ." And she, behind the curtain, prostrate on the table, screaming "Oh, God, just let me die!" And me there, and where?

"And how about the Wilsons; have you heard from them?"

"No, I haven't. But Doris Tidman called; they're all fine; Gloria had another boy, no complications," said Midge to her husband Earl.

In the dining room, called that but really part of the spacious living room, the Sunday dinner eaten, the Major's stomach full, he continued the conversation by saying, "Midge, do you remember Lieutenant Cranston?"

Oh my God! Could he have found out?! No, impossible, would have said something before, answer calmly. "No, Earl, I don't." Such a nice mustache and such a nice build and it was raining and the kids were in bed, Earl was called to the base, and when was it? August, '61, was it? Midge or Ella, wife of Earl, mother of two, bleached hair, healthy figure, bulky knit sweater.

"Sure you do—stayed here back in '61; he and his wife." Earl, husband of Ella, Major in the United States Air Force, receding gray hairline, medium build going soft, father of Sandy, the first, Richard, the second.

Doesn't know. For sure doesn't know. "Oh, now that you mention it, I do recall him, yes." Yes, yes, it was '61. Yes, Jim—forget! But listen too as I wash the dishes, gather, gather, plates and glasses. Earl called to the base and oh, yes, his wife to her mother's where Jim couldn't stand because . . . what was it? Hated his mother-in-law, her mother, couldn't stand her and it was raining but it stopped in the middle of the night, I saw out the hall window when I got up 'cause Ricky was crying and now, what has happened to him, what is he going to say about him? Is he coming?

"I remember Dad, he was the one with that fancy lighter that used those gas cartridges, wasn't he?" Richard the son, twelve, blond crewcut, sweatshirt.

"It's called butane, son." He turned to Sandy. "You remember him, honey."

"Uh-huh." God I hate these Sunday dinners. Joe should call soon. It's past three. He should have called. I just want to get out of here. I wish I still had my apartment. A cigarette.

The Major was pulling out a filter cigarette and Sandy took one too.

"You really shouldn't smoke so much, Sandy. It's bad for you." He lit his and then hers. He turned to his wife. "He's up for promotion and do you know what for?" Not expecting an answer, sipping his daquari.

"No, dear, what for?" Midge, washing, looked for a can to put grease in since you couldn't put it in the garbage disposal because that lady that time had told her it would stop the drain and there was a can here in the garbage bag that was fine even though it had a little wet remnant of tomato soup but that the white greasy grease would come off the skillet into it.

Midge came back into the living room, reached for a cigarette, lit it, and began to sip from her martini. The Major began to tell the story, but was interrupted by Midge as Richard left the table.

"Ricky, you come right back to the table and excuse yourself. Right Now!" Ricky came back to the table, excused himself, and left. "That's better," said Midge. She then turned to Sandy and said, "Why don't you finish the dishes, dear, while Earl and I talk."

Sandy left the table without a word, and walked into the kitchen. The first drags, nice and smooth, blowing them out. And I shouldn't smoke, why, isn't *he* smoking, and isn't the Witch? She's drinking again too, she drinks so much whenever he's gone. I wish he had taken me with him to Germany, maybe I could have told him then—but about what? About Mother and her drinking for one thing—and she said *I* should go to a psychiatrist! Huh. That's a laugh. Oh, shit I just remembered; I have to go for that physical Monday. If Mother sees those tracks she'll kill me. I could say that they are bruises—but, oh, damn, the doctor would know. But I *have* to go. Maybe they'll heal. Damn, she always puts these cigarettes in her coffee cup.

The phone rang.

Sandy put the cup down immediately and walked swiftly into the living room to answer it. Richard had run down from upstairs to answer it, but she beat him to it. "Come on Ricky, get away." Brat, little brat. She stood by the phone, her slightly plump body leaning against the wall. She had straight blonde hair that came to her shoulders where it was abruptly cut, after the fashion of the day. She was short, her legs somewhat bowed, and her eyes, hazel and slightly bloodshot, watched her small fingers twisting and turning the curled black cord as she talked to Joe, who had called from the city.

"Listen, baby, where's your folks?"

"Uh, they're . . . I can't say. . . ."

"They right there by the phone?"

"Uh-huh."

"And the kid?"

"Just going outside. It's all right to talk. The other phone is upstairs."

"Listen, baby, I got the spike; Jimbo came through."

"Oh, Joe, . . . and the—"

"Scorin' that this afternoon. Leroy's in town."

"When are you gonna see him?"

"At four, baby, so keep cool 'til then—hey, hows about Daddy's car onight?"

"Oh, Joe, I don't know; I had it last night—"

"Well try, baby, try!"

"Okay, I'll get it."

Later Sandy was in the bathroom. Closing the door, and looking at herself in the mirror, her pale hands clutching the ends of her hair, she thought that no one could tell, just by looking at her. After all, it has only been once and she looked like any nineteen year old girl. Besides, when she went away to college she would start all over.

Then sitting there looking at the porcelain sink edge she remembered the dream she had last night. She was alone on the desert, the cold wind chilling her body. Suddenly the pack of wolves near her out of sight began to howl. She ran in the dark in terror and crashed into a cactus bush. The wolves, frothing at the mouth, huge and fierce with fangs glistening in the moonlight, enclosed her, a leader, the largest and most vicious, approached her as the others, anxious and hungry, looked on. The wolf came near her, his breath hot in the cold, visible in the moonlight. His sharp teeth were no more than a foot from her ankle. He howled wildly, piercing the desert night. She cringed and clung to the bush trembling in fright. Then a wave of understanding passed from the wolf to her; she knew that they would not eat her now if she could find something else for them, something better to eat.

She got up and started walking across the desert looking and fearing as the pack, whining and growling amongst themselves, followed her. Then she saw a dog and pointed it out to the pack; the wolves rushed over to it as its legs buckled and it began shivering. But they didn't attack it; they wanted a male dog. They came back to her and they all began walking again. Then in a flash the leader charged at her, knocking her down with his huge paw, claws scratching through the flesh; then its white teeth sunk into her ankle. But before the others got near her, before the wolf had taken a second bite, a light shone on a small cabin where a little girl and her parents stood. A small Scottish Terrier stood shaking beside them. In an instant the wolfpack had left Sandy and not heeding the pleas of that small dog, harmless, pleading in a Scottish Brogue, devoured it. The child cried as the family, in each others arms, glared at Sandy as she sank in herself.

She flushed the toilet and brushed her teeth.

Away far in miles, though not in time, at the home of a family that is moving out of their suburban home for another one, the mother, the father, the elder daughter, the younger son and a friend of his sat down to dinner before the younger part of the party were to choose what things they needed for their apartments. Carol, the daughter, twenty-three years old, was dressed in a fashionable mod outfit of navy blue; she was medium height and figure, attractive, and had short black hair that kept finding its way through the triangles of her earrings. She was single. The son, Bruce, was thin, mustached and unsmiling. Bill, his friend, had an angelic face with blue eyes and blond hair. The mother was in her early fifties as was her husband, and wore thin rimmed silver glasses that did not cover black circles that shadowed her eyes. Her husband was robust and appeared very healthy as he came in from painting the exterior of the house to the round dinner table. He sat down between Carol and Bill, who sat next to Bruce in the circle. The mother sat down between Carol and Bruce.

Mother: So where do you go to school, Bill?
Bill : I go to Prescott, downtown.
Mother: Oh, very good; What are you studying?
Bill : International affairs; I'm specializing in Western European affairs.
Mother: Very good. Do you speak a language?
Bill : I speak French and German.
Mother: Oh, you speak German—
Carol : Pass the butter please, Bruce.
Bill : Do you speak Yiddish? I speak a little.
Mother: Well, I used to, but I can understand it well enough.
Carol : Mother, Bruce says you gave away that red chair to the junk man.
Mother: Yea, I did, I didn't know anybody wanted it. Bruce said he wanted the green one, and Richard didn't want it so—
Carol : But Mother how could you? That was my chair. That's always been my chair. Daddy, how could you let her do it?
Father : Well, I wasn't here honey—
Carol : But Bruce and I have friends that could have used some of that stuff; How could you just give it to a truck to be thrown away—
Father : That chair just got crunched up in the machine; we just could not afford to keep that stuff here because it's costing us enough to move already.
Carol : Well how about the bookcase, you know that nice one that was downstairs. (Her mother looked down, smiling bashfully at Bruce.) You didn't!
Mother: Yes, I did, honey, I had to.
Carol : But how could you? I wanted that!
Father : Where do you live, Bill?
Bill : I have an apartment downtown.
Father : Oh.

Bill : Yes, it's near Ruthmount Circle.
Father : Then you live near Carol; You're neighbors. . . . Oh, Bruce did you ever get that car fixed?
Bruce : Uh, yea, it's all fixed. Runs beautifully.
Father : Just the starter, huh?
Bruce : Uh-huh.
Carol : Well how about those old 78's?
Mother: You know that Raymond took some of them last year—
Carol : That means all the good ones are gone . . . at the bottom of the Hudson.
Father : Those rugs are at the bottom of the Hudson too.
Mother: I had to give some of those lamps to the junkman too.
Carol : (Very angrily and nervously) Mother you didn't! I wanted that red one; please don't say you gave that one to be crushed too. Well, did you?
Mother: (Shaking her head, ashamedly) Yes.
Carol : That's horrible. Even if I didn't want it, there are people—there are people who need those things, in the ghettoes, and all around there are people in need and—
Mother: I'm sorry, I—
Carol : Oh don't be sorry. You should be sorry; there is always someone who could use those; and besides, I wanted that lamp! Oh, you are so mindless! Excuse me.
(She rises from the table and leaves the room.)

Her tall slim body leaning flush against the white border of the second floor window, she surveyed intently, soberly, the wide green expanse of lawn below. Although she had seen Spring setting in through her bedroom window each year from her eighth one on, fourteen Springs, fourteen rushes of new, warmer weather, fourteen new years, fourteen new promises, she had never noticed the weeds before. She glared at the oily sprawling weeds that seemed to be choking the new verdurous shoots. The wind this time was not the warmly soothing breeze that she had felt before, flowing through the window in an easy calm steram. Nor was it the exhilarating breeze that drove her outside to work or play in that large open yard with her sister. Now it caused a rush of something different, a rush of something powerful, a rush of blood that drove her to fling herself violently into the soft comfort of the bed. As she clung to the pillow, her long fingernails digging into its whiteness, a flower on the bedspread touching her eyes dampened . . .

Diedra in Junior High School

To a good kid from a worser one. Good Luck, Mary.
To Diedra, Yes I am going steady with Timmy and ya' can tell the world.
Your homec beater upper. Luff' ya', Martha.
To one of the coolest kids in the eighth grade. Jody.
To a real sweet gal, remember the (fun?) we had in algebra. Byee, Sandi.
To the one-time phantom daisy, good luck, Linda.

Diedra, Diedra, Sweet Sixteen

At the same window six years ago, middle of November, high school week, coke and rock and roll weekends, she stands there waiting for him to come up; it was inevitable, the way they were talking. Her soft blonde hair cuddled those blue eyes, that smooth white face, those thin pink lips. Her well formed slender body, rich full breasts, dark skinned legs, thin ankles, small feet, all prepared for his presence as he walked up the stairs.

Sportsman, Baptist Elder, father of four, shook, shook, yanked her, yanking her by the arms, shaking her whole body which she let go limp, shouting to her unlistening ears and defiant, unfeeling face, trying to yank some sense into her.

Where did you get those bruises?

My father gave them to me last night—I wouldn't wash the dishes.

You mean he hit you just for that, just for not washing some dishes?

If you get eighty-five or better, and only then, if you keep your grades 'B' or better, you may go out one night a weekend and be in by eleven o'clock.

You may not wear those brown shorts; they are much too short—they are indecent.

Thirty points for washing the dishes each day after dinner.

Your father has changed his mind about this Saturday night; You will have to babysit for Timmy.

Twenty points for doing the ironing, ten for washing.

Three phone calls a day for no more than ten minutes each.

I or your father shall give bonus points when we think you have earned it.

The bedspread was dry now and empty. Diedra on this spring night, home for the Easter vacation from the small college in Ohio, stood gazing out the window of my apartment, a cigarette held loosely between her long slender fingers. Her long blonde hair stretched down to the middle of her smooth bare back.

"Honey, you're thinking too much—come over here."

She did not answer. She opened the window allowing the warm breeze to flow into the bedroom; she dropped her cigarette out of the window, not watching where it fell. The moonlight was the only light, silvering her hair. In a motionless motion she returned to my side, walking gracefully, confident and slow, calm as the breeze that I felt wavering over my body. As her fingers touched my skin and her mouth went over my neck, renewal and resurgence, warmth and touch, strength and intensity, united into passion. Holding and being held, felt and being felt, hurting and being hurt, obliterating all but the all-containing moment, the intense present where there was nothing but right there for she and I and she, but yet everything was there.

It was a night of mutual triumph. And later as she lay there, lying apart on my arm, satisfyingly calm, breathing more slowly, I could see only her face and her eyes. She wisked back her hair from her eyes and was not looking at me. Her lips were moist and slightly parted, her white teeth shining. Her smile was one of complete relaxation, couched in the softness of her cheeks. And there in those aethereal glazed blue eyes, half open, teary and bright, shone a ray of intense happiness; a ray that went out with her gaze, a gaze in no direction, looking at nothing, but looking out far and beyond, onward . . .

And there, far and far, I see them, gathering. I see others, too, and they all are there, being. I see something gush and flow from one to another, each to each, and it is mellow. They wear neither the bond of time past nor the bond of time future, yet they look forward, nourished by rich silver fountains of spontaneity. It is there that I see them standing, phantom daisies, nameless, yet each the fabulous Phoenix, consumed by fire and rising from the ashes, where all was open, opening, opening where nothing was everything.

—John Dolen

The Sweet-After-Death Plant

I would be a thin dry plant,
With fallen leaves scudding sharply about me,
Part of the gray beauty of an Autumn forest.

Then I would never have to look at you again,
And the wind would make music
With my falling hair.

And is the polonaise over?
My gay dress falls like a closing umbrella.
I shall take it to the corner

And shake from it the liquid sparkles,
And lean it against the wall to dry.
O will you not take me home now,

For I am like that odorless plant
Which after it is dead
Smells so sweetly of vanilla;

I have no use for the flowering dance,
And the gay flush in your cheek
Derives from a deceitful scent.

O will you not take me home now,
Where when it rains
You will imagine I am crying,

Where I may merge peacefully
Into the impassive beauty
You once compared me to.

—*Michael Gura*

"Do I Hear Bells"

She took the pot pie out of the oven and set it, oozing, on the table. Her son slammed the living room door. She tap-danced into the room: "Just in time, you came home just in time, before you came my time was running. . . ."

"We having pot pie?"

"Helen," her mother was visiting, "it's abnormal. You can't raise a child alone. If he lived with us he'd have a mother and a father . . ."

"He'd have a grandmother and a grandfather."

"You know what I mean. Helen, be sensible."

The music drifted across the verandah and onto the lake. "Helen," his voice was rich with mystery, "I love you, Helen." He looked out over the water and the lake trembled from shore to shore. He kissed her throat, "You are so sensible."

"I hate pot pie."

"Shut up and eat." She looked across the table to her mother. "You think living with me is abnormal. Think what living with him is doing to my psyche."

"I don't think we should discuss it . . ." her mother said.

"Oh, but of course. Another martini, son?" She poured a second glass of milk.

"What do you mean, 'broken'?" She eyed the television viciously. "It was just working."

"It's broken." He tried to unscrew the knob on the desk drawer, "So I guess we'll have to talk or something."

"Talk! We have a guarantee! This set is guaranteed!"

"We can finish my astronaut book."

"In a minute," she juggled the Yellow Pages on her knees.

"Why Thursday? Your ad says 24-hour service. It's right here: 'Radio-dispatched trucks. Day or night.' What time Thursday? Listen, I know it's a picky thing, but that's False Advertising."

"Your first initial?"

"Helen," she whispered, studying her cigarette, then raising her eyes, languorously, to meet his. The Blue Mosque, she knew, rose in silhouette behind her.

"H," said the man. "Thank you, lady," and hung up.

"Why didn't you call me something decent?" she had screamed through her teens.

"Helen Hayes," her mother had told her, folding the laundry.

"Helen of Troy," her father said through the sports pages.

Her tafetta slip across her shoulder, she gangled the length of the living room. "Swish," she sang, "swish, swish, swish, swish." He son turned the radio on.

She had ordered the lemon verbena from a candle-maker in the Carolinas. She stood before the mirror and watched her waistline dwindle dab by dab.

"Miss Scarlett?" the maid called from the porch, "Miss Scarlett, you got a beau a-waitin' . . ."

"I'm coming," the tafetta slip went swish into the living room.

"Double your pleasure, double your fun," said the radio.

"You been eating oranges?" asked her son.

Thirty-three first graders stared as Helen entered the room. "Miss Schaffer," she crossed the floor with authority, ""it's Thursday, Miss Schaffer, and I'm afraid . . ."

"Ah," Miss Schaffer's voice was pastel pink. She glanced over the class, "you have come for Edward . . ."

"Randolph. I made an appointment, I'm afraid, and we . . ."

"The dentist?" Miss Schaffer approved.

"Well, no, the television man, really. It sounds very silly, but you see, I thought my mother would . . ."

"You are Randolph's sister."

"Sister!" said a little voice in the third row. "Ha!"

He balanced on the back of the sofa, wings extended. "What'da think?"

"About what?"

"Miss Schaffer. She's rotten!" He jumped to the floor.

"I liked her."

"Boy. Helen . . ."

"Who? Helen! I am your mother. Don't call me that."

"Everybody calls you that."

"You are not everybody. You're my son. You're a crummy six-year old and you're going to call me *mother*."

"Boy."

"Get the door," she screamed, standing without shoes on the couch.

"Why?" Randolph shouted back at her.

"Because I'm hanging a picture."

"What picture?" he asked, standing beside the couch now.

"Get the door."

"Who's he?"

"Damn you!" She jumped down and stalked to the door.

He was wearing a white trench coat and a black beret. Manacled to his wrist was a trim attaché case. She took a step backward. He tilted his head and studied her. "Slattery TV." he said.

"Who's Oscar Wilde?" Randolph held the bottom of the unrolled poster, "and how come you're putting him up there?"

"Because." She hammered the final tack. "What do you think?" she asked Slattery TV.

"It don't look too bad. I won't have to take it to the shop or nothin'. Lady, you shoulda brought this in, saves five bucks service charge, you know."

"No, I don't mean the TV. I mean the picture. Oscar Wilde."

"Oh," said the man.

"Ick," said the boy.

"I don't know," the TV man considered the poster," it's somethin' ya gotta think about, ya know."

"When grandma sees it!" said Randolph, "Boy!"

"Sure you don't want coffee?" Helen waved the pot in invitation.

"No, listen, lady," he gestured at the poster. "Lady, I been thinking, you know?"

"Yeah?" said Randolph.

"Yeah. And . . . I don't know . . ." he rubbed his hands over his face and through his hair, "Well, I think . . ." he looked at the boy and then at Helen. "Well, I don't think that's Oscar Wilde."

—Carolyn Banks

"THE TRIUMPHANT ELEPHANT"

The triumphant elephant has a long nose,
two white tusks,
flappy fanning ears,
funny looking toes,
a pig's tail,
friendly eyes,
a memory for peanut-donors,
and
a lot of fun blowing water around.
But so does the non-triumphant elephant.

—Bart Gruzalski

Exeunt

Fortinbras the brave, Fortinbras the bold,
The body of the prince is stiff and cold.
How many times have you stood in this place
And eulogized the last of a race
of kings?
So ring
Down the curtain!
It is over again;
The fighting Prince Fortinbras has come, spoken, done.

Bring on the lights! Now the hall's in truth a hall.
Pins-and-needles prickle feet and murmuring footfalls
Are like a jetsam-coated tide resolved beneath the moon,
Until at last poor Fortinbras stands on the stage alone:

For Hamlet's gone to take his tea and Claudius to bed;
The janitors are steeped in wine instead
Of sweeping down the aisles;
The audience is miles
away . . .
So say,
Sweet Fortinbras,
What the hell's come over ya,
A sudden catatonia?

Fortinbras the brave, Fortinbras the bold,
Lay off your sword and your gold-laden robe;
Lay off your leather cap; lay off your boots;
And when you're stripped to underwear, lay on your sharkskin suit.

There was a time, sweet Fortinbras, you ruled these emptied boards;
But soon they'll lock the theater up and you'll be rudely stored
In shadow-place like props of pomp awaiting synthesis
Of paint and maché into battlements grey where nothing's amiss,
save in Denmark . . .
Then at length the shuddering hands of the clock
Shall hold, awfully still, in the palace,
For you, solemn strutting Fortinbras, executor of space.

—*Michael Gura*

Prose Award:

Robert Ferris, COUSIN HOWARD

Poetry Award:

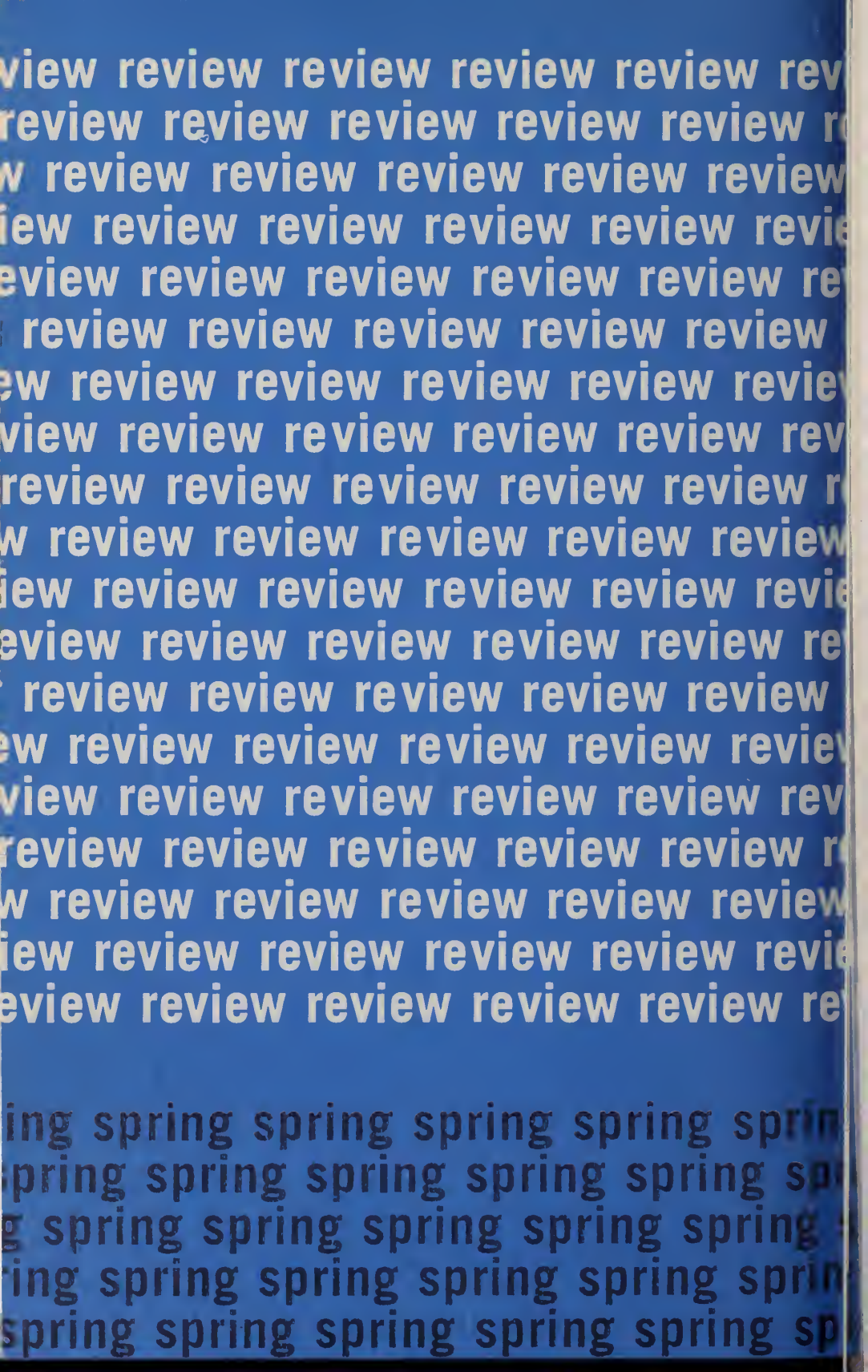
Michael Gura, THE SWEET-AFTER-DEATH PLANT

Honorable Mention:

Stephen Gurney, REFLECTIONS ON THE DEATH OF MARTIN LUTHER KING

Bart Gruzalski, MY ANSWER, MY LOVE (Winter issue)

Staff members are ineligible for awards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